



President Barack Obama delivers his speech to the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) symposium at the National Defense University in Washington, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012. Seated are, from left, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Sens. Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar.

(AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

US weighing military options if Syria uses WMD

KIMBERLY DOZIER
PAULINE JELINEK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House and its allies are weighing military options to secure Syria's chemical and biological weapons, after U.S. intelligence reports show the Syrian regime may be readying those weapons and may

be desperate enough to use them, U.S. officials said Monday. President Barack

Obama, in a speech at the National Defense University on Monday, pointedly warned Syrian President Bashar Assad not to use the weapons.

"Today I want to make it absolutely clear to Assad and those under his command: The world is watching," Obama said. "The use of chemical weapons is and would be totally unacceptable. And if you make the tragic mistake of using these weapons, there will be consequences and you will be held accountable."

GOP's new 'cliff' offer dismissed

ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans put forth a \$2.2 trillion "fiscal cliff" counteroffer to President Barack Obama on Monday, calling for raising the eligibility age for Medicare, lowering cost-of-living hikes for Social Security benefits and bringing in \$800 billion in higher tax revenue — but not raising rates for the wealthy. The White House declared the Republicans still weren't ready to "get seri-



House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio speaking to reporters on Capitol Hill in Washington.

(AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

ous" and again vowed tax rate increases will be in any measure Obama signs to prevent the government from the cliff's automatic tax hikes and sharp spending cuts.

Administration officials also hardened their insistence that Obama is willing to take the nation over the cliff rather than give in to Republicans and extend the tax cuts for upper-income earners.

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Russia, Turkey downplay Syria rift

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV

Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — The leaders of Russia and Turkey on Monday downplayed differences over the Syrian civil war, saying they shared the common goal of trying to end the humanitarian crisis there and hailing their countries' booming trade ties.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia, one of Syria's few remaining allies, said he understood Turkish concerns about its border security after Syrian shells hit Turkish territory in recent months.

But he warned that Turkey's request that NATO deploy Patriot missiles on its border with Syria could escalate fears of a wider conflict. Turkey and its Western and

Arab allies are calling for the ouster of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"We share Turkey's concern about the developments on the border," said Putin. "But we are calling for restraint because increasing (military) potential will not settle the situation but create the opposite effect."

After meeting Putin in Istanbul, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the Turkish and Russian foreign ministers will work together more intensively on the Syrian problem.

Russia has blocked tough action against Syria with its Security Council vote at the United Nations, while Turkey has urged the establishment of an internationally protected buffer zone for civilians in Syria.

Putin and Erdogan emphasized the blossoming economic ties between their two countries, saying they should aim for bilateral trade to triple to \$100 billion a year. Russian and Turkish officials signed 10 agreements on trade, energy, finance, banking and other issues. □

Putin, who was making his first trip after a two-month hiatus that raised concerns about his health, showed some rigidity in his movements but no sign of pain or difficulty.

He walked past television cameras and climbed the podium without showing discomfort, and seemed at ease turning around in his seat and shaking hands with officials during the signing ceremony. □



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan speak during a joint news conference after their talks, in Istanbul, Turkey, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012.

(AP Photo)

GOP's new 'cliff' offer dismissed

Continued from front

With the clock ticking toward the year-end deadline, House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, and other Republicans said they were proposing a "reasonable solution" for negotiations that Boehner says have been going nowhere. Monday's proposal came in response to Obama's plan last week to raise taxes by \$1.6 trillion over the coming decade but largely exempt Medicare and Social Security from budget cuts. Though the GOP plan proposes to raise \$800 billion in higher tax revenue over

the same 10 years, it would keep the Bush-era tax cuts — including those for wealthier earners targeted by Obama — in place for now. Dismissing the idea of raising any tax rates, the Republicans said the new revenue would come from closing loopholes and deductions while lowering rates. Boehner called that a "credible plan" and said he hoped the administration would "respond in a timely and responsible way." The offer came after the administration urged Republicans to detail their proposal to cut popular benefit programs like Medicare, Social Security and

Medicaid.

The White House complained the latest offer was still short on details about what loopholes would be closed or deductions eliminated, and it insisted that any compromise include higher tax rates for upper-income earners.

Asked directly whether the country would go over the cliff unless GOP lawmakers backed down, administration officials said yes. Officials said they remained hopeful that scenario could be avoided, saying the president continues to believe that going over the cliff would be damaging to the economy. □

AROUND THE WORLD

Russian traffic jam stalls 3 days

MOSCOW — The snow came down hard Friday, more than 2 feet in places, the first big storm of the year. But in Russia, where the winters are long and hard, it was nothing out of the ordinary, it seemed. Then some localities apparently decided on their own to close the exits on the M10 highway between Moscow and St. Petersburg, a 400-mile stretch. The ensuing traffic jam — 100 miles long involving 10,000 vehicles — trapped some motorists for three days and forced senior Russian officials to go on television Monday to mollify the thousands of angry drivers. Roadside cafes gouged those wanting sausages and loaves of bread, and the price of cigarettes was reported to have shot up ten-

Israeli rammed, attacked with ax

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Israel's internal security agency says a Palestinian man rammed his car into a military jeep in the West Bank, flipping it over, and then attacked the agents inside with an ax.

The Shin Bet agency says one of its agents opened fire and killed the Palestinian. It says two agents were hurt in the ax attack. Palestinian truck driver Rafik Salem says the Palestinian car hit the jeep at high speed Monday before veering into an olive grove. He says an ax-wielding man emerged from the grove and attacked the Israelis. It was not clear if the assailant acted on his own. Palestinian attacks on Israelis in the West Bank have dropped off sharply since an uprising a decade ago, but tensions remain high. □

Mob storms City Hall over UK flag

BELFAST, Northern Ireland (AP) — A Protestant mob has stormed into the grounds of Belfast City Hall and clashed with police after the council's Catholic majority voted to remove the British flag from the building for most of the year. Police say five police officers and two security guards were injured during Monday night's melee outside city hall. More than 1,000 Protestants had rallied outside as the council voted 29-21 to remove the Union Jack from the building for all but 17 official days each year. The British flag has flown from the city hall's dome for more than a century. Some in the crowd smashed through gates, vandalized cars and fought with police. Officers responded with swinging batons. □

Man dies climbing Rio's Sugarloaf

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Emergency responders say a 32-year-old man has fallen to his death while climbing one of Brazil's most-visited landmarks, Rio de Janeiro's Sugarloaf Mountain. Emergency responders interviewed Monday on Globo television said Bruno da Silva Mendes plunged about 197 feet (60 meters) while scaling with a friend on Sunday. The woman was hospitalized with light injuries. Eyewitness reports suggest a steel cable snapped as the pair approached the top of the 1,300-foot-tall (396-meter) mountain. Emergency responders said Mendes' hanging body was evacuated from the sheer face of the mountain and taken to the hospital, but he succumbed to his injuries. □

US weighing military options if Syria uses WMD

Continued from front

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in Prague for meetings with Czech officials, said she wouldn't outline any specifics.

"But suffice it to say, we are certainly planning to take action if that eventuality were to occur," Clinton said.

Options now being considered range from aerial strikes to limited raids by regional forces to secure the stockpiles, according to one current U.S. official, and one former U.S. official, briefed on the matter. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly. The administration remains reluctant to dispatch U.S. forces into Syria, but a U.S. special operations training team is in neighboring Jordan, teaching troops there how to safely secure such

sites together with other troops from the region, the officials said.

The warnings come after U.S. intelligence detected signs the Syrian regime was moving the chemical weapons components around within several of Syria's chemical weapons sites in recent days, according to a senior U.S. defense official and two U.S. officials speaking on Monday. Two officials said the activities did not involve movement of components in or out of various sites, but the movement was confined to within the individual locations. One of the officials said they were seeing activities they had not seen before that bear further scrutiny.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about intelligence matters. According to another senior US official, the US is worried about "indica-

tions of preparations" for a possible use of the chemical weapons. The U.S. still doesn't know whether the regime is planning to use



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, left, shakes hands with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar in Brussels, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012. Commenting on Syria's possible use of WMD's, Clinton said the US is 'certainly planning to take action if that eventuality were to occur.'

(AP Photo/Kevin Lamarque, Pool)

them, but the official says there is greater concern because there is the sense that the Assad regime is under greater pressure now. U.S. intelligence officials also intercepted one com-

munication within the last six months they believe was between Iran's infamous Quds Force, urging Syrian regime members to use its

cies, and other intelligence officials have said Iran also does not want the Syrians to use their chemical weapons.

The Assad regime insists it would not use such weapons against Syrians, though it carefully does not admit to having them. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the government "would not use chemical weapons — if there are any — against its own people under any circumstances." The regime is party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning chemical weapons in war.

The Syrian assurances did not placate the White House. "We are concerned that in an increasingly beleaguered regime, having found its escalation of violence through conventional means inadequate, might be considering the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people," said White House press secretary Jay Carney. □

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Families grieve Belcher murder-suicide

MARIA SUDEKUM

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (AP)

— Breaking their silence for the first time, the family of the woman shot and killed by Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher said Monday their “hearts are truly broken” and asked for privacy while they grieve the loss of two loved ones. Belcher shot and killed his 22-year-old girlfriend, Kasandra Perkins, at their Kansas City home Saturday

family also asked that the media “respect our privacy during this difficult time.” “Please keep us in your hearts and prayers as well as the Belcher family,” the statement said. Kansas City police Sgt. Marisa Barnes said Monday that authorities hope to deliver an investigative report to prosecutors on Tuesday. “They’re moving it along just like any other case. There’s a formal process it has to go through,” she

had been shot. Belcher then drove about five miles to Arrowhead Stadium. There, he was met by general manager Scott Pioli and coach Romeo Crennel, and Belcher thanked them for all they’d done for him. The police report said that when officers arrived at Arrowhead about 8 a.m., they saw several people in the practice facility parking lot.

“As they approached, a subject later identified as Jovan Belcher, observed their presence and moved to an area behind a vehicle,” the report said. “From that position Belcher shot himself one time in the head.” Belcher was taken to a hospital, where he died, the report said. Barnes said Monday that firearms found at the couple’s home were legally registered to Belcher. It is unknown how many guns were found. Police spokesman Darin Snapp said Monday that Belcher’s mother, who had been staying with the couple, was given temporary custody of the couple’s daughter. But, he said, it was unclear Monday if the grandmother and baby were still in the Kansas City area or if they had returned to Belcher’s home in West Babylon, N.Y. Perkins was from the Austin, Texas, area. Chiefs running back Jamaal Charles and his wife, Whitney, also released a statement Monday asking for privacy. □



People stand by a small shrine outside the Long Island home of Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012, in West Babylon, N.Y. People living at and visiting the home stopped and recited a prayer at the shrine on Monday. On Saturday, Belcher killed his girlfriend and himself in Kansas City, Mo. (AP Photo/Frank Eltman)

day before driving to Arrowhead Stadium, where Belcher committed suicide in the practice facility’s parking lot, police said. The couple had a 3-month-old daughter, Zoey. “Our hearts are truly broken for Kasi was a beloved daughter, granddaughter, sister, mother, cousin and friend,” the family said in an emailed statement. The

said. In an incident report released Monday, police said officers were called to the Kansas City home of Belcher, 25, and Perkins about 7:50 a.m. Saturday. Police found Perkins on the floor of the master bathroom. The report said she died from apparent gunshot wounds, but did not say how many times she



President Barack Obama shakes hands with Deputy Secretary of Defense Ash Carter at the National Defense University at Fort McNair in Washington, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012.

(AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

Obama praises 20-year effort to secure nukes

MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hailing two decades of efforts to help the former Soviet Union secure nuclear weapons stockpiles, President Barack Obama said Monday that the world must continue to stand guard against nuclear threats — including terrorists who seek to gain control of nuclear weapons. “We cannot let our guard down,” Obama said, calling efforts to combat nuclear terrorism one of his top priorities as president. Obama praised the 20-year-old Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which has provided billions of dollars in U.S. equipment and know-how to help Russia and former Soviet bloc nations safeguard and dismantle nuclear and chemical weapons. The program, initiated by retiring Republican Sen.

Richard Lugar and former Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn, has helped deactivate more than 7,600 nuclear warheads. Marking the program’s 20th anniversary, Obama cited the “extraordinary progress” that’s been made in securing nuclear materials and thanked Nunn and Lugar for their leadership. In a speech at the National Defense University in Washington, the president called Nunn and Lugar “visionaries” who “challenged us to think anew” about ways to secure nuclear stockpiles produced during the Cold War. He also said they were models for bipartisan cooperation, who showed great integrity, decency and leadership over their long careers. Obama called Lugar, who was defeated in a bid for re-election, a friend, and said his legacy — and Nunn’s — is “a safer and more secure world.” □

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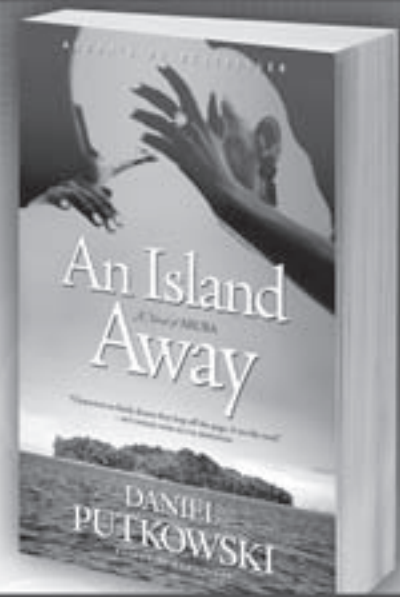
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Cuomo travels to DC to press for disaster aid

RAYMOND HERNANDEZ

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WASHINGTON – It was an unusual role for a politician who is accustomed to being in complete charge. But there was Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Monday in the position of supplicant. He made the rounds in Washington, asking top administration and congressional officials for billions of dollars in aid to help New York recover from the devastation of Hurricane Sandy.

In the end, though, how much money Washington would provide New York, New Jersey and other states battered by the storm remained up in the air – though there were ample expressions of sympathy and pledges of support.

"We want an answer, and we want an answer quickly so we can plan," Cuomo said at the end of his trip during a news conference, where he was joined by members of New York's congressional delegation. The states' pleas could not come in a more challenging political climate, as President Barack Obama and congressional leaders in both parties try to hammer out an agreement to enable the government to head off a possible fiscal crisis next month, when broad tax cuts expire and automatic spending cuts go into effect.

The states pummeled by the storm are seeking enormous amounts of financial aid. Cuomo, a Democrat, says New York needs \$33 billion to cover storm

cleanup and an additional \$9 billion to protect against future storms, while Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey, a Republican, says the

on Thursday, according to Cuomo, who is coordinating relief requests with his New Jersey colleague. Yet, as he emerged from



New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, center, before meeting with members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Dec. 3, 2012. On Monday, Cuomo pressed top officials in the White House and Congress for billions of dollars in aid to help New York recover from Hurricane Sandy.

(Luke Sharrett/The New York Times)

cost of hurricane damage in his state totaled \$36.8 billion. Christie plans to make his own trip to Washington

a meeting with leaders of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Cuomo described himself as optimis-

tic.

"I think we're moving forward," he told reporters after huddling with Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, the committee's Democratic chairman, and Thad Cochran of Mississippi, the Republican vice chairman.

Mary Landrieu, D-La., who was also in the meeting and heads a subcommittee overseeing disaster funding, recalled the support a New York lawmaker gave her state after Hurricane Katrina, and pledged to return the favor.

"I'm going to step up," she said.

The White House is expected to release a proposal to Congress for supplemental funds to help states struggling with costs associated with the storm.

But several congressional officials predicted that

the White House proposal would be for less than what the states are requesting.

Seeking to squeeze as much help out of Washington as he can, Cuomo, after first meeting with White House officials, packed his schedule with meetings with leading members of both parties.

Cuomo began his day at the White House, where he met with Jacob Lew, Obama's chief of staff, Shaun Donovan, the secretary of housing and urban development, and other officials.

His trip also included a visit with Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., the majority leader, and Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, the Democratic leader in the House, both of whom have shown an openness to fulfilling the states' requests. □



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matinee: 12:15 2:30 G

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matinee: 2:45 R

late show: 11:45 SR

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daily: 6:00 8:45 NEW

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late show: 11:45 SR

CLOUD ATLAS

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RISE OF THE GUARDIANS

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SKYFALL

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THE TWILIGHT SAGA: BREAKING DAWN PART 2

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US town evacuates as police relocate explosives

HOLBROOK MOHR

KEVIN MCGILL

Associated Press

DOYLINE, Louisiana (AP)

— Weather could complicate the transfer of roughly 6 million pounds (2.72 million kilograms) of explosives that state officials say were haphazardly stored at an industrial site in northwestern Louisiana and led to the evacuation of a small town, a state police spokeswoman said Monday.

If lightning is spotted within five miles (eight kilometers) of the site, authorities will suspend efforts to move the artillery propellant that began on Saturday, Lt. Julie Lewis said.

Light rain fell at midday in the vicinity of the site near the town of Doyline. No lightning was expected Monday, but thunderstorms were forecast for Tuesday. Officials estimate that more than half of Doyline's 800 residents heeded police advice to evacuate in advance of the cleanup at the Explo Systems Inc. site. Col. Mike Edmondson, commander of Louisiana State Police, said the material is stable and would need an ignition source to explode. Precautions were taken because officials fear that any spark could set off a huge explosion of the material, which they said was stored improperly in a relatively small area.

Edmondson said that Explo Systems leases and controls about 400 acres (162 hectares) of the 15,000-acre (6,070-hectare) Camp Minden, a former ammunition plant that now is a state-owned industrial site

and home to a National Guard training facility. He estimated that the M6 propellant was stored in an

area of less than 10 acres (4 hectares). It was discovered there, stored indoors and outdoors, sometimes in

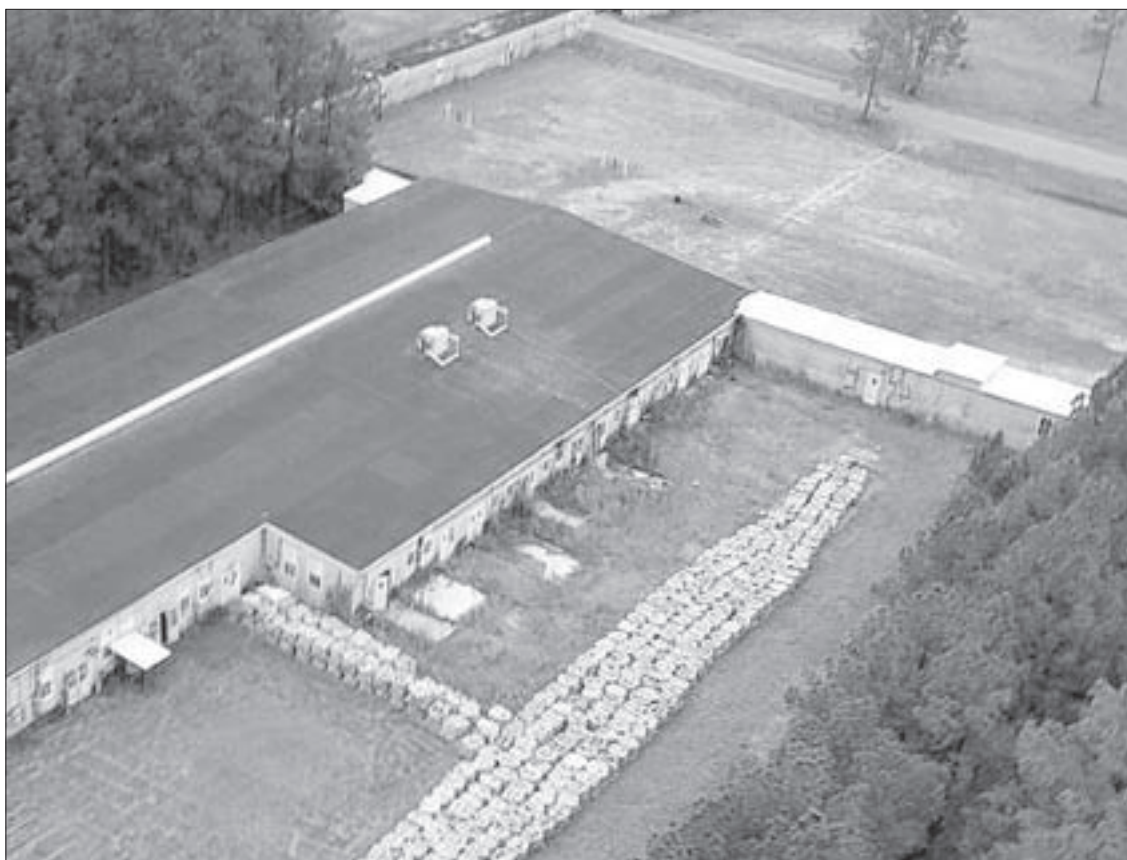
containers that had spilled open, by a trooper following up on an October explosion at the facility.

Explo is now the subject of a criminal investigation, state police said.

The company has not publicly commented on the investigation. Its website says it has been "demilitarizing" and recovering explosives and propellant for 15 years. Edmondson said "it was stuffed in corners. It was stacked all over."

He said that in two days, crews had moved nearly a 1 million pounds (450,000 kilograms) from the tightest-packed buildings into approved containers and onto 27 tractor-trailers to move to storage bunkers. Company officials could not be reached Sunday. The owners were believed to be returning Monday from a business trip to South Korea, but a manager has been working with state police from the start, Edmondson said.

A call to a Shreveport attorney who represents the company was not returned Monday. □



This aerial photo provided by the Louisiana State Police shows part of the smokeless explosive powder improperly stored outside Explo Systems Inc., a munitions dismantling facility at Camp Minden at Doyline, La. (AP Photo/Shreveport Times)



Ann Romney is handed an umbrella by Nancy Marriott in Wofeboro, N.H. Mitt Romney announced Monday, Dec. 3, 2012, he is getting a new job title: member of Marriott International's board of directors. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Mitt Romney rejoins Marriott

SAMANTHA BOMKAMP

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP)

— Ex-presidential candidate Mitt Romney is rejoining Marriott International's board of directors.

He's held the post with the hotel chain twice before. The first time was from 1993 to 2002, when he left to campaign for governor of Massachusetts, and from 2009 to 2011, when he left to start his campaign for the presidency.

It's the first job announcement Romney has made

since he lost the November election to President Barack Obama. Romney has kept a low profile since the election. He's spent the past month largely in seclusion at his family's California home.

Romney has always been connected to the Marriott dynasty. He was named after J.W. Marriott.

Romney's full name is Willard Mitt Romney and Marriott's was John Willard Marriott. Marriott was close friends with Romney's father. □



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Professors Jim Krumm and Heidi Arnold, the couple killed by Krumm's adult son Chris Krumm on Friday, Nov. 30, 2012.

(AP Photo/Casper College)

Aunt: Campus killer upset with dad over genes

MEAD GRUVER
Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyoming (AP)

— A relative of a man who killed his father in front of a computer science class at a Wyoming community college called him a “borderline genius” upset by the belief he had inherited Asperger’s Syndrome from his dad. An aunt of 25-year-old Christopher Krumm, Barbara Nichols, says her nephew had trouble keeping jobs and blamed Asperger’s. Police say Krumm shot 56-year-old James Krumm with an arrow and stabbed him in his Casper College classroom Friday. Around six students escaped unhurt, but earlier Krumm fatally stabbed his father’s girlfriend, 42-year-old Heidi Arnold, at their home. Christopher Krumm fatally stabbed himself in the classroom. Asperger’s is a mild form of autism not normally associated with violent behavior. □

Coast Guardsman dies when boat rammed

MARINA DEL REY, California

(AP) — A suspected smuggling vessel rammed a U.S. Coast Guard chase boat during a counter-drug operation off the California coast, killing one Coast Guardsman and injuring another, authorities said.

The panga — an open, low-sided fishing boat favored by Mexican smugglers — was captured after the Sunday crash near the Channel Islands, west of Malibu.

Authorities say such vessels carrying drugs or illegal immigrants from Mexico have been ranging farther and farther north along the California coast.

Asked whether any drugs were found on the boat seized Sunday, Coast Guard spokesman Adam Eggers said he could not immediately comment.

Chief Petty Officer Terrell Horne III, 34, of Redondo Beach was pronounced dead Sunday after he was brought ashore at Port Hueneme, said James Baroni, Ventura County chief deputy medical examiner. Horne suffered a traumatic head injury in the crash, Coast Guard officials said. The second man was treated for minor injuries. His name wasn’t released.

Horne and others were aboard a small inflatable boat deployed from the Marina del Rey-based Coast Guard cutter Hali-

but. The Halibut’s commanding officer, Lt. Stewart Sibert, told a press conference Monday that he and his crew were devastated by the loss of the man he called the best shipmate he had ever known.



This undated photo provided by the U.S. Coast Guard shows Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Terrell Horne III, stationed on the Cutter Halibut. Horne III, a Boatswain Mate, was killed in the early morning of Sunday Dec. 2, 2012, from injuries sustained during law enforcement operations near Santa Cruz Island, Calif.

(AP Photo/Stewart Sibert)

“He was my friend, he was my confidante, he was the glue that held my crew together,” Sibert said, chok-

ing back tears. “He gave me advice more times than I could count.” Sibert credited Horne with helping to rescue people on a struggling sailboat just a few months ago off of the Channel Islands.

worse,” Sibert said.

Horne came up with a plan, and his experience and professionalism saved three lives, Sibert said.

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said Horne and fellow crewmembers of the Halibut “were engaged in an at-sea interdiction when they came under threat by a small vessel that rammed their small boat.”

A Coast Guard maritime patrol aircraft spotted the panga before dawn and the cutter was sent to intercept it, officials said.

The cutter deployed the smaller inflatable chase boat, but as that vessel approached the panga with its blue light flashing, the panga veered toward it at high speed and struck it before fleeing.

Horne and another crewman were thrown into the water. Another Coast Guard vessel stopped the fleeing panga and detained two suspects. □

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Egypt's crisis widens; march, strikes planned

MAGGIE MICHAEL

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's political crisis is widening, with plans for a huge march and a general strike Tuesday to protest the hurried drafting of a new constitution and decrees by President Mohammed Morsi that gave him nearly unrestricted powers. Morsi also faces the prospect of wider civil disobedience as media, the tourism industry and law professors pondered moves that would build on a strike by the nation's judges. The planned strikes and march raise new fears of unrest, threatening to derail the country's transition to democratic rule.

"Egypt is a big ship in high seas, and no one should stop its captain from taking it to the shore," said Morsi's legal adviser, Mohammed Gaballah, defending his boss.

"The ship must keep moving under any conditions," he told The Associated Press on Monday. The country's judges have already gone on strike over Morsi's Nov. 22 decrees that placed him above oversight of any kind, including the courts. Following those decrees, a panel dominated by the president's Islamist supporters rushed through a draft constitution without the participation of representatives of liberals and Christians. Only four women, all Islamists, attended the marathon, all-night session. Morsi has called for a Dec. 15 national referendum

to approve the constitution. An opposition coalition dominated by the liberal and leftist groups that led last year's uprising had already called for a general strike Tuesday and a large demonstration against the constitutional process and Morsi's decrees. Newspapers

squatted in a prison cell. Hotels and restaurants are considering turning off their lights for a half-hour to protest against Morsi, according to the Supporting Tourism Coalition, an independent body representing industry employees. Cairo University law professors petitioned their dean to let

from the draft constitution of guarantees against jailing reporters in defamation cases.

Protests over the draft constitution also spread to state television. On Sunday, presenter Hala Fahmy carried a white shroud while hosting a current affairs program, according



Riot policemen stand guard in front of Egypt's top court during a protest for supporters of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, unseen, in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012.

(AP Photo/Nasser Nasser)

plan to suspend publication, and privately owned TV networks will blacken their screens all day. Monday's front pages of Egypt's most prominent newspapers said, "No to dictatorship" on a black background, with a picture of a man wrapped in newspaper and with his feet shackled while he

them stop teaching. "The professors believe they must not teach law under a regime that doesn't respect the law," said one of the professors, Khaled Abu Bakr. The staff of the Internet edition of the al-Ahram daily marched Monday to the journalists' union in central Cairo to protest what they said was the absence

to footage posted on the Internet. She was taken off the air, but not before she told viewers: "We have to tell the truth whatever the price is. We have to carry our shroud in our hands." She told the independent al-Masri al-Youm daily newspaper that she planned to sue the station. □

Israel feels heat from allies over planned homes

JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel rejected a wave of American and European condemnations Monday over plans to build thousands of new homes in West Bank settlements, vowing to press forward with the construction in the face of widespread international opposition.

The announcement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office was likely to deepen a rift that has emerged between Israel and some of its closest allies following the U.N.'s recognition of a Palestinian state last week. The U.N. decision appears to be fueling a tougher international line against Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Israeli ambassadors were summoned for consultations in five European capitals, and European officials warned of other potential measures against Israel. In Washington, the U.S. said the Israeli actions were "especially damaging" to peace prospects. Italian Premier Mario Monti and French President Francois Hollande issued a joint statement saying they were "deeply worried" by Israel's settlement plans. The two men, meeting in Lyon, France, called the Israeli decisions "serious and illegal" and a "serious obstacle" to Mideast peace. Netanyahu, however, showed no signs of bending. His office said Israel would continue to stand up for its interests "even in the face of international pressure, and there will be no change in the decision taken." Europe could potentially play a strong role in any international action against the settlements. Europe is Israel's largest trade partner, and Israel has a partnership with the EU giving its exports preferential status. But divisions within Europe could make it difficult to take any concerted action. Germany, Europe's largest economy, has a close relationship with Israel, and given its history as the perpetrator of the Holocaust, it is unlikely to take any strong action against the Jewish state. □

Thousands flee as typhoon hits Philippines

JIM GOMEZ

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Thousands of villagers fled from their homes as a strong typhoon roared closer to the southern Philippines, prompting authorities to suspend sea travel in high-risk areas and halt gold-mining in a mountain town notorious for deadly landslides. The day before the storm's forecast Tuesday morning landfall, President Benigno Aquino III appeared on nationwide TV to appeal to people in Typhoon Bopha's path to move to safety and take storm warnings seriously. "This typhoon is not a joke,"

Aquino said Monday after meeting top officials in charge of disaster-response. "It could be the strongest to hit the country this year," he said. "But we can minimize the damage and loss of lives if we help each other." The storm was approaching from the Pacific Ocean with sustained winds of 175 kilometers per hour (109 miles per hour) and gusts of up to 210 kph (130 mph). Its eye was last tracked Monday evening at 390 kilometers (242 miles) southeast of Surigao del Sur province's

Hinatuan township. Bopha, which has a 600-kilometer- (373-mile-) wide rain band, was expected to barrel across southern and central provinces before blowing out into the South China Sea on Thursday, according to government forecasters. Aquino said army troops were deploying search and rescue boats in advance and villagers were being pre-emptively evacuated. Authorities ordered small boats and ferries not to venture out along the country's eastern seaboard, warning of rough

seas and torrential rain and wind that could whip up four-meter (13-foot) waves. Thousands of villagers moved out of their homes in high-risk coastal villages and along rivers, including in southern provinces that were devastated in December by a deadly storm. In the mountainous Compostela Valley, authorities halted mining operations and ordered villagers to evacuate to prevent a repeat of deadly losses from landslides and the collapse of mine tunnels seen in recent storms. □

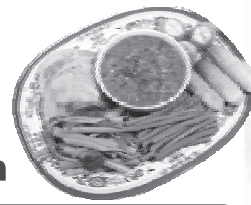


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Iran hints direct talks with US are possible

ALI AKBAR DAREINI

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Direct talks between Iran and the United States are possible, but any such breakthrough would have to be approved by the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's foreign minister said Monday.

The comments by Ali Akbar Salehi were a first sign Tehran may seek diplomatic overtures with what it long considers a nemesis in Washington, as sanctions over Iran's contentious nuclear program stunt the country's economy. "Comprehensive political talks are within the powers of the exalted supreme leader," Salehi said in comments published by the official IRNA news agency. The U.S. cut diplomatic ties with Iran after militant

students stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran to protest Washington's support for deposed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi following the country's 1979 revolution. The revolution toppled the pro-U.S. leader and led to an Islamic clerical government.

Tehran cooperated with the Washington in the early days following the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, but relations reached a new nadir when former President George W. Bush branded it part of the "Axis of Evil." Iran also supported the toppling of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003, but opposed U.S. occupation of the country. In recent weeks, the idea of direct talks has been debated in Iranian media. □

UN pulling staff from Syria, violence around Damascus

BEN HUBBARD

JOHN HEILPRIN

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Fighting between rebels and government forces raged near the Syrian capital Damascus on Monday, forcing an inbound commercial jet to turn back while the U.N. said it was withdrawing staff because of deteriorating security conditions.

Lebanese security officials said Jihad Makdissi,

sive swept them out. The spike in violence recently is concentrated in the ring of mostly poor suburbs around Damascus but often bleeds into the capital itself as rebels bring their fight closer to Assad's seat of power. Assad's forces have so far repelled major rebel advances on the capital, though their hold may be slipping.

"The security situation has become extremely difficult,

are also stopping most staff trips outside Damascus.

In another sign of deteriorating security, an Egyptian commercial jet aborted a trip to Damascus in mid-flight because of violence near the airport. The EgyptAir flight from Cairo rerouted about 30 minutes after takeoff because Egyptian officials received word from their counterparts in Damascus that the area near the airport was



A Syrian soldier aims his rifle at free Syrian Army fighters during clashes in the Damascus suburb of Daraya, Syria. (AP Photo/SANA)

a polished Foreign Ministry spokesman known for defending the regime of President Bashar Assad in fluent English, flew from Beirut to London. But it was not immediately clear whether he had defected.

The fighting over the past few weeks in and around Damascus has been the most serious in the capital since July, when rebels captured several neighborhoods before a swift government counteroffen-

including in Damascus," said Radhouane Nouicer, the U.N.'s regional humanitarian coordinator for Syria. Nouicer said the U.N. was withdrawing most of its international staff from Syria due to security issues, adding that up to one quarter of the 100 international staff working for several U.N. agencies could leave by week's end. There are about 900 more local staff working for the U.N. in Syria, officials said. U.N. teams

not safe, Egyptian airport officials said.

EgyptAir canceled all further flights to Syria for Monday and Tuesday and will decide later whether to resume flights later in the week, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters.

EgyptAir had just resumed flights following a three-day suspension because of violence near the airport. □

Japan inspecting tunnels following deadly collapse

MALCOLM FOSTER

Associated Press, TOKYO (AP)

—Japanese officials ordered the immediate inspection of tunnels across the country Monday after nine people were killed when concrete ceiling slabs fell from the roof of a highway tunnel onto moving vehicles below. Those killed in Sunday's accident were traveling in three vehicles in the 4.7-kilometer (3-mile) long Sasago Tunnel about 80 kilometers (50 miles) west of Tokyo. The tunnel, on a highway that links the capital to central Japan, opened in 1977 and is one of many in the mountainous country. The transport ministry ordered that inspections be carried out immediately on 49 other tunnels around the country that are either on highways or roads managed by the

central government and of similar construction. Police and the highway operator Central Japan Expressway Co. were investigating why the concrete slabs in the Sasago Tunnel collapsed. An inspection of the tunnel's roof in September found nothing amiss, according to Satoshi Noguchi, a company official. An estimated 270 concrete slabs, each weighing 1.4 metric tons (1.54 short tons), suspended from the arched roof of the tunnel fell over a stretch of about 110 meters (120 yards), Noguchi said. The operator was exploring the possibility that bolts holding a metal piece suspending the panels above the road had become aged, he said. □

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SKorea to reroute flights on NKorean rocket path

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)

— South Korea said Monday that it plans to reroute passenger flights over the Yellow Sea to avoid possible collisions with debris from a long-range rocket that North Korea plans to launch this month.

The Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs said it made the decision after learning that North Korea had informed China and Singapore of the flight path and other details of the launch.

North Korea told those nations the rocket would be launched in the morning and its debris would fall into the Yellow Sea and in waters east of the Philippines. The International Maritime Organization said Monday that North Korea had informed it that it planned to launch a satellite between Dec. 10-22 during the hours of 7 a.m and noon. The North provided a list of dangerous coordinates where debris could fall.

South Korean officials said they will reroute six Korean Air flights. They also are

considering whether to reroute or change the departure times of several Korean Air and Asiana Airlines flights to Manila.

In a defiant move expected to raise the stakes of a global standoff over its missile and nuclear programs, the North announced Saturday that it would launch a rocket mounted with a polar-orbiting Earth observation satellite this month. The United States considers North Korea's rocket launches to be veiled covers for tests of technology for long-range missiles designed to strike the United States. Such tests are banned by the U.N. Security Council which has imposed two rounds of sanctions on the North following its nuclear tests. It would be North Korea's second launch attempt under leader Kim Jong Un, who took power following his father Kim Jong Il's death nearly a year ago. The embarrassing misfire of its last rocket eight months ago earned the country widespread international condemnation.

The Korean Committee for Space Technology said the launch was a request of late leader Kim Jong Il.

Ban Ki-moon urged North Korea "not to take any further provocative actions that will heighten tension in

ter." Ban called the failed launch "deplorable" because it defied international opinion, violated a U.N.



A North Korean soldier stands in front of the country's Unha-3 rocket, at Sohae Satellite Station in Tongchang-ri, North Korea. South Korea said Monday that it plans to reroute passenger flights over the Yellow Sea to avoid possible collisions with debris from a long-range rocket that North Korea plans to launch this month.

(AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)

He died on Dec. 17, 2011, and North Koreans are expected to mark that date this year with some fanfare. U.N. Secretary-General

the region" after the failed launch in April, and U.N. spokesman Martin Nesirky said Monday "his view has not changed on the mat-

Security Council ban, "and was a threat to international stability," Nesirky told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York. □

Colombia bombs rebel camps, 6 bodies recovered

CESAR GARCIA
Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP)

— Colombia's military said Monday that it killed at least 20 Revolutionary Armed Forces insurgents in a weekend air raid on a cluster of guerrilla camps in its most deadly attack on the country's main leftist rebel group since March.

President Juan Manuel Santos has refused to honor a unilateral cease-fire declared by the rebels,

known by their Spanish initials FARC, when they began formal peace talks with the government in Havana on Nov. 19.

Six bodies were recovered after Sunday's pre-dawn bombardment of the camps in the country's southwestern state of Nariño near the Ecuadorean border, said Gen. Leonardo Barrera, head of the army's joint southwestern command. He said scattered remnants

of other rebels were found. "Also found there were chains where it appears they constantly kept kidnap victims that they must have certainly brought from Ecuador," Barrera said.

The regional army commander, Gen. Jorge Alberto Segura, said about 60 rebels were in the three camps, which were located with the help of local residents.

If the rebel death toll was

indeed as high as 20, it would have been the highest for the FARC since 36 rebels were killed in March in the bombing of a rebel camp in Vistahermosa, a traditional insurgent stronghold in the southeastern state of Meta.

As a condition for beginning the first, secret, six-month phase of talks, which ended in August, the FARC agreed to halt all ransom kidnappings.

The rebels had said they

no longer held any kidnap victims when peace talks began last month. But last week, they freed four Chinese oil workers whom they had abducted in June 2011.

Analyst Ariel Avila of the Nuevo Arco Iris foundation said he didn't believe Sunday's bombardment would in any way affect the peace talks. "There's no effect because this is what happens in war. That's the calculus," he said. □

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Peru asks UN court to set sea border with Chile

MIKE CORDER

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — Peru asked the U.N.'s highest court Monday to set a maritime border between it and Chile, in a case that could greatly expand the amount of rich seas under Peru's control off the two Andean neighbors' Pacific coasts. Peru launched the case at the International Court of Justice in 2008, arguing that a maritime boundary was never established and that two agreements which Chile claims set the border are non-binding and merely denoted some fishing zones. Chile insists the border was clearly set in treaties signed in 1952 and 1954.

Chile and Peru are among the world's top producers of fishmeal, and the waters off their coasts are an important source of income for both countries. If Peru wins, it could gain con-

trol over more than 60,000 square kilometers (23,166 square miles) of ocean that Chile has controlled for the last 60 years.

Peru was presenting its arguments Monday and Tuesday. Chile will respond Thursday and Friday.

The Peruvian government's lawyer, Alain Pellet, told the court there is "a flagrant lack of any maritime delimitation" between the two countries and that Chile's proposed border "radically cuts off Peru's access to the high seas."

Pellet said Peru wants the 16-judge court to draw a line that will equally divide the sea off the two countries' coasts based on established international law. "Peru asks neither more nor less than the laws of the sea grant to all coastal states," he said.

Peru and Bolivia waged a joint war against Chile from 1879-1884 and lost badly, with Chile seizing a chunk

of southern Peru as well as all of Bolivia's coastline. Chile has long held that all border questions were resolved by several 20th century treaties. Chilean President Sebastian Pinera last week said the long-



Presiding judge Tomka, third from right, opens the hearings in a dispute between Peru and Chile over the two countries' maritime boundary at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Monday Dec. 3, 2012.
(AP Photo/Peter Dejong)

awaited case in The Hague boils down to defending "a cause that belongs to us all, such as defense of our oceans ... and our sovereignty." Chilean representative Maria Teresa

Infante Caffi told reporters outside the courtroom that her country's standpoint was not changed by Peru's arguments. "The central point for Chile is the existence and validity of the limits that were established

through bilateral agreements between the two countries," she said.

Peru's foreign minister, Rafael Roncagliolo, disagreed. "No maritime boundary agreement exists between Peru and Chile and that was the heart of the presentations we made," he told reporters. Roncagliolo stressed that in the 1980s "Peru sought a negotiated solution and then formally sought a discussion with Chile again in 2004 but "in the face of the impossibility of reaching a negotiated outcome we have turned to the court as a civilized and peaceful option."

Rulings by the world court are final and binding. □

Vietnam:

Chinese boats sabotaged cables

CHRIS BRUMMITT

Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) —

Vietnam's state-owned oil and gas company accused Chinese fishing boats on Monday of sabotaging one of its seismic survey ships in the South China Sea, adding to already high tensions over Beijing's disputed territorial claims in the waters.

PetroVietnam said two Chinese fishing boats cut across cables being laid by the survey vessel Binh Minh 2 off the coast of central Vietnam on Friday.

"PetroVietnam vehemently protests the Chinese fishing boats' action against the Binh Minh 2," Pham Viet Dung, the deputy head of

exploration at the company, said in a statement on the company's website. "We ask that China educate its citizens to respect Vietnamese waters."

Chinese and Vietnamese Foreign Ministry officials had no immediate comment.

China claims most of the South China Sea, bringing it into conflict with its smaller neighbors. Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan also claim part of the waters, which are believed to be rich in gas and oil reserves as well as fish stocks. China, which is strengthening its navy, has been increasingly assertive in pressing its claims as its economy as grown in

recent years.

It is the second time that Chinese fishing vessels have reportedly damaged the Vietnamese survey ship's cables. An incident in June last year off Vietnam's central coast triggered rare street protests in Hanoi.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the reported incident took place in contested waters. PetroVietnam said it occurred 43 miles (69 kilometers) from the small island of Con Co.

China recently issued new passports featuring a map showing its territorial claims in the South China Sea, angering Vietnam and the Philippines, which have refused to stamp the passports. □

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In growing ruse, McAfee says he's left Belize on the run

MARK STEVENSON

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) —

Software company founder John McAfee said Monday he has fled from Belize using a bizarre ruse, adding yet another chapter in what threatens to become one of the biggest media fugitive frenzies since O.J. Simpson led police on a low-speed chase in 1994.

McAfee claimed in a blog posting he had evaded authorities by staging an elaborate distraction in neighboring Mexico.

In an email to The Associated Press, McAfee confirmed a posting to his website in which he described, in what appeared to be joking tones, how he mounted the ruse.

"My 'double,' carrying on (sic) a North Korean passport under my name, was detained in Mexico for pre-planned misbehavior," McAfee wrote in the posting, "but due to indifference on the part of authorities (he) was evicted from the jail and was unable to

serve his intended purpose in our exit plan."

It was a turn typical of the bizarre saga of the eccentric anti-virus company founder wanted for questioning in connection with the killing of fellow American ex-pat Gregory Vi-ant Faull, who was shot to death at the Belize island where they both had homes in early November.

Since then, McAfee has refused to turn himself in for questioning saying he fears Belizean police would kill him, and has titillated the media with phone calls, emails and blog posts detailing his life on the lam. It has all resulted in a rather undignified media scrum to get interviews with McAfee, complete with taunts.

Vice magazine, two of whose journalists are reportedly traveling with McAfee, posted a story entitled "We Are with John McAfee Right Now, Suckers."

A representative of the Faull family said Monday that the real issues — the murder of an American



In this Nov. 8, 2012 photo, John McAfee speaks at a ceremony in Ambergris Caye, Belize. McAfee said Monday he has fled from Belize using a bizarre ruse, adding yet another chapter in what threatens to become one of the biggest media fugitive frenzies since O.J. Simpson led police on a low-speed chase in 1994.

(AP Photo/Sofia Munoz)

who by all accounts was well-liked by his neighbors on Belize's Ambergris Caye — are getting lost.

"The real issues are that a human life was violently taken, (and) authorities

lack all the information ... we're beyond the danger of them being lost, it's become entertainment. This is tragic to the family," said Dan Keeney of Texas-based DPK Public Relations,

who has issued statements on behalf of the Faull family.

A woman who answered the phone at an Orlando, Florida phone number listed for Vickie Faull confirmed she was a relative and said that Keeney spoke on behalf of the family, but had no further comment.

"Mr. McAfee is astute at media manipulation, and he's using those skills to great effect," said Keeney. Keeney added in email that "we strongly urge journalists covering the McAfee story not to glorify the words and actions of this person who, by refusing to cooperate and tell police all he knows about the murder of Greg Faull, is harming the investigation of the murder."

"The family of Mr. Faull is concerned that journalists may be assisting Mr. McAfee either implicitly by helping him to create an elaborate fiction that undermines trust in authorities or explicitly in his efforts to escape."

Faull was shot to death in his home, a couple of houses down from the compound where McAfee kept several noisy dogs, armed guards and entertained a steady stream of young women brought in from the mainland. □

Curacao police chase leads in gold heist

BERT WILKINSON

KAREN ATTIAH

Associated Press

WILLEMSTAD, Curacao (AP) — Police in Curacao said that they have several leads following a brazen heist in which gunmen pretending to be police stole 70 gold bars worth an estimated \$11.5 million from a fishing boat.

Authorities have the license plate number of one of three cars used in last Friday's getaway, and they have been asking for the public's help in tracking the suspects, police spokesman Reggie Huggins told The Associated Press.

"There is information coming in," he said. "We are getting reactions from the public, but we still have to sort it out."

Police have said that at least six men were involved, but no one has been arrested in a case that surprised authorities in the Dutch Caribbean island.

Huggins said police are still

interviewing the captain and three crew members of the ship, which contacted officials in Curacao about the incoming gold shipment as part of regular security protocol. The gold bars weigh about 216 kilograms (476 pounds).

Police declined to say where the gold was being delivered, but one crew member, who identified

himself to the AP as Raymond Emmanuel, said they were delivering the gold to an unidentified company in Curacao.

He said the crew left Guyana on Monday and arrived in Curacao early Friday. Shortly after the ship docked, masked gunmen wearing jackets with the word "police" assaulted the boat's captain and

then stole the gold bars. Huggins said that security guards allowed the suspects to enter a restricted area thinking they were customs officials.

Rechenel Martyn, spokesman for Curacao Customs, said the boat's captain shared with authorities the intended recipient of the gold bars, but he declined to release the name because the case is under investigation. He added that the ship's crew followed protocol and that there is no special procedure for shipments of high value.

Meanwhile, officials in Guyana said they are investigating whether the gold was mined in the South American country, which is near Curacao.

Environment Minister Robert Persaud told the AP that they have requested details about the gold bars, adding that such shipments are usually flown directly to the buyer and involve heavy security. □



The "Summer Bliss" fishing boat sits docked at the Willemstad port in Curacao. Masked men in jackets emblazoned with the word "police" boarded the "Summer Bliss" in an early morning assault last week, and stole 70 gold bars worth an estimated \$11.5 million, police spokesman Reggie Huggins said.

(AP Photo/Karen Attiah)



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Delta Air Lines also operates non-stop flights to Aruba from LaGuardia Airport (LGA) on select Saturdays, and offers connecting services to Aruba from LaGuardia Airport (LGA) and Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) via its hub in Atlanta.



With more than half of its visitors returning year after year, Aruba is celebrated for its diverse land and sea activities and attractions, from the pristine sandy

beaches of the southern coast to the rugged and desert-like terrain of the North Shore; 50+ annual events from the famous Carnival to growing favorites like the, Aruba International Film Festival, Aruba In Style, Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival, International Beach Tennis Championships and Soul Beach Music Festival; authentic, flavor-rich cuisine ranging from local delights like Keshi Yena to international delicacies; and warmth in everything from the weather to Aruban hospitality. Additional non-stop flight markets for Aruba include Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Ft. Lauderdale, Houston, Miami, Orlando, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

Aruba is on Atlantic Standard Time (AST) year-round. This is one hour later than Eastern Standard Time (EST) during Daylight Savings Time. About Aruba: As one of the most revisited destinations in the Caribbean, Aruba -- One Happy Island -- is an island of contradictions, where pristine turquoise waters collide against the desert-like terrain of the north shore;

where peace and relaxation coexist with wild and rugged adventures; where Dutch influence meets American ease; and where a diverse history parallels a bright future. Nestled in the Southern Caribbean on the fringes of the hurricane belt, the island is just a two-and-a-half hour flight from Miami and a four-hour flight from New York City and also boasts year-round cooling trade winds and an average 82 degree temperature. Aruba offers beach lovers, adrenaline junkies, relaxation seekers and everyone in between a slice of paradise, including breathtaking beaches, a booming culinary scene, world famous festivals and events, exciting land and water activities, art galleries and museums, sumptuous spas, championships golf and exclusive shopping.

With all-inclusive resorts, boutique hotels in charming Eagle Beach, high-rise branded hotels in Palm Beach or a cosmopolitan city hotel in Oranjestad, the island of contradictions provides the perfect getaway for first-time guests and loyal visitors.



Royal Rushes on Aruba:

How buying a new camera can change your world!



"I had just bought a new camera and wanted to try it out at a wedding," tells camera man /videographer François de Kok about the instant success of his company Royal Rushes. "When people viewed the movie, the calls came. And they're still coming." Three years ago his partnership

with editor Robert van den Broek segued into Royal Rushes and since that time the two have been traveling all over the world, shooting wedding movies. The celebrity wedding of Yolante Cabau van Kasbergen and soccer hero Wesley Sneijder has been their most eye-catching ef-

fort, but their other work is not to be sneezed at either. And recently the two were on Aruba to shoot a wedding movie. We caught up with François during a filming session at Wonders, the gorgeous home-away-from-home hotel of Gaston Verlaan. Located in the Emmastraat,



this former doctor's mansion does not need any enhancing or photo shopping as it is stunning as it is. The clip can shortly be viewed on Wonders' Facebook page; the professionalism of François and Robert will be splashing off the screen as the relaxed atmosphere at Wonders comes across. Amateur actors in the clip are Monique and Paul, friends of Gaston's who are sailing around the world in their yacht, the Full Circle. Paying guests-cum-apprentice sailors keep them afloat. De Kok tells a bit about his other work, away from his wedding company: "I shoot television programs

in Holland. Programs like Ruben versus Sophie, de week van Filemon and Ivo Niehe's TVshow op reis and Nu we er toch zijn. Whenever we can plan it in, we shoot the video clips. As weddings are always planned many months in advance, it is easy to work around them.

Maybe you can tell the fiancées on the island that we love to travel, so coming to Aruba for work is our pleasure!"

For those who would like to view clips of Royal Rushes, please surf to www.royal-rushes.nl. For couples planning their wedding: a wedding movie by these pro's will last you a lifetime! □

Beauty On The Beach

Claudia Santelli

She is from Caracas, Venezuela. Her first time in Aruba and she is staying at Brickell Bay. She is leaving on Friday.

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With launch of new Aruba subsidiary:

Curacao's InselAir targets Miami-Venezuela market

ORANJESTAD - Curacao-based airline group InselAir has finally launched a new airline subsidiary in Aruba after one year of regulatory delays. InselAir also aims to launch a third airline on the island of Saint Maarten in 2013, in line with its ambition to establish a pan-Caribbean airline group.

InselAir Aruba plans to commence services and launch several routes over the next few months including to Havana, Manaus, Miami, Quito, San Juan and several points in Venezuela. The carrier is now targeting to carry a significant number of passengers between Miami and Venezuela, an important market for InselAir in Curacao and other Caribbean carriers as there is insufficient non-stop capacity in Miami-Venezuela market to meet demand. InselAir Aruba will also take over some of the frequencies between Aruba and



Curacao that are now operated by its sister carrier. InselAir Aruba formally secured its air operators' certificate (AOC) on 29-Nov-

2012 at a signing ceremony in Aruba with Aruba's aviation minister, according to InselAir CEO Albert Kluyver. The AOC ends a tedious

process which began in 2011, when the privately-owned airline group began planning to launch an airline in Aruba. InselAir Aruba

initially planned to launch services in early 2012 but Mr Kluyver told CAPA at the recent ALTA 2012 Airline Leaders Forum in Panama that it took much longer than initially anticipated for Aruba aviation authorities to process its AOC application.

The group's plans for InselAir Aruba are primarily the same as initially outlined in 2011.

CAPA reported one year ago that InselAir Aruba was planning to launch services in Jan-2012 with a fleet of one Boeing MD80 and two Fokker 50s.

At the time four countries were expected to be served as part of the carrier's initial network - Cuba, Curacao, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela - with additional routes, including to Brazil, Ecuador and the US island of Puerto Rico, expected within the first year. □

Sunday December 9th:

Beach Tennis Aruba hosts another Team Cup Challenge



PALM BEACH - Beach Tennis Aruba (BTA) is organizing another smashing Team Cup Challenge! There is space for a total of 24 teams. A team consists of 2 men and 2 women, they will play one set of men, women and mixed doubles against 3 other teams in a pool. After pool play it goes to a knockout round.

3 Levels: Fun/Intermediate, Advanced & Open. Winners receive a dinner certificate and a beautiful medal.

Format:

- Pools of 4 teams.
- 1 Pool @ 2 courts.
- 1 Men doubles, 1 women doubles and 1 mix doubles.
- Matches played till 6 with a tie break at 6-6. So this means all teams will start at the same time and keep playing their matches one after the other.

Program:

- 10 am: start of pool play.
- 3 pm: semi finals.
- 5 pm: finals.
- Sign up thru www.beachtennisaruba.com □



Create Christmas ornaments at Arikok National Park!

Arikok National Park would like to inform the community about its upcoming activity on the 8th of December. The activity is about recycling. The main aim of this activity is to create awareness about the importance of sustainability through recycling. The purpose of this day is therefore, to connect the kids with the park in a fun and creative way. Important is, that this connects with the overall mission of creating awareness and education of the park.

The children are asked to bring recycling objects. They can design their creative ideas using recycled materials also provided by Arikok. These objects will be used as a Christmas décor at the visitors' center in Arikok National Park. The invitation goes to all kids on the island that have passion for nature. Between 6 – 10 years old with a total of +/-30 participants.



Skiers as Christmas ornaments created by students. Arikok National Park is offering a fun activity on December 8th, inviting children to create their own handmade Christmas ornaments out of recycled materials. (AP Photo/Mary Cunningham)

Location: Visitors Centre
Arikok National Park
Date: 8 December 2012

Time: 9am- 11am
Aim: To create awareness of recycling

Participation: Free
Registration: call Park 585-1234; Emilenne

Boekhoudt
Masha Danki! Team Arikok.
☐

Catch your own dinner with Driftwood! Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "From the pier to your plate!"



ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fishermen of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad.

Driftwood owner Herby

Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words "fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35 ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50 ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on a daily basis from 8am to 12 noon and from 1 pm to



Winners of Intl. LUHRS Marina Group Blue Marlin Release Tournament 2009

5pm.
Catch your own dinner
A charter includes: captain, mate, all fishing equipment, bait, sodas and bottled water. On a full day charter sandwiches and snacks are also included. You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com.
Driftwood Restaurant

This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their extended menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 4-course menu for just \$25.95
Charter deep sea fishing rates:
\$400 - 1/2 day

\$760- full day
Rates per boat
Max. 6 people
Driftwood Restaurant
Authentic Aruban Seafood Restaurant; Klipstraat 12, Downtown Oranjestad
Tel: (297) 583 2515
www.driftwoodaruba.com
Opening hours: every day, from 5pm till 10:30pm,
Sunday Closed.



Ted Ligety reacts after winning at the men's World Cup giant slalom ski race in Beaver Creek, Colo., Sunday, Dec. 2, 2012.

Associated Press

Ligety emerges as contender for overall title

PAT GRAHAM

AP Sports Writer

BEAVER CREEK, Colorado

(AP) — So efficiently, Ted Ligety weaved his way through a giant slalom course filled with deep ruts ready to swallow up his skis. And so effortlessly, the U.S. skier gained speed with each gate he buzzed by on his way to the finish line at Beaver Creek.

Lately, it's not a matter of whether he will win a GS race, but by how much. That's how dominant he's been in the discipline, winning Sunday by a massive margin of 1.76 seconds.

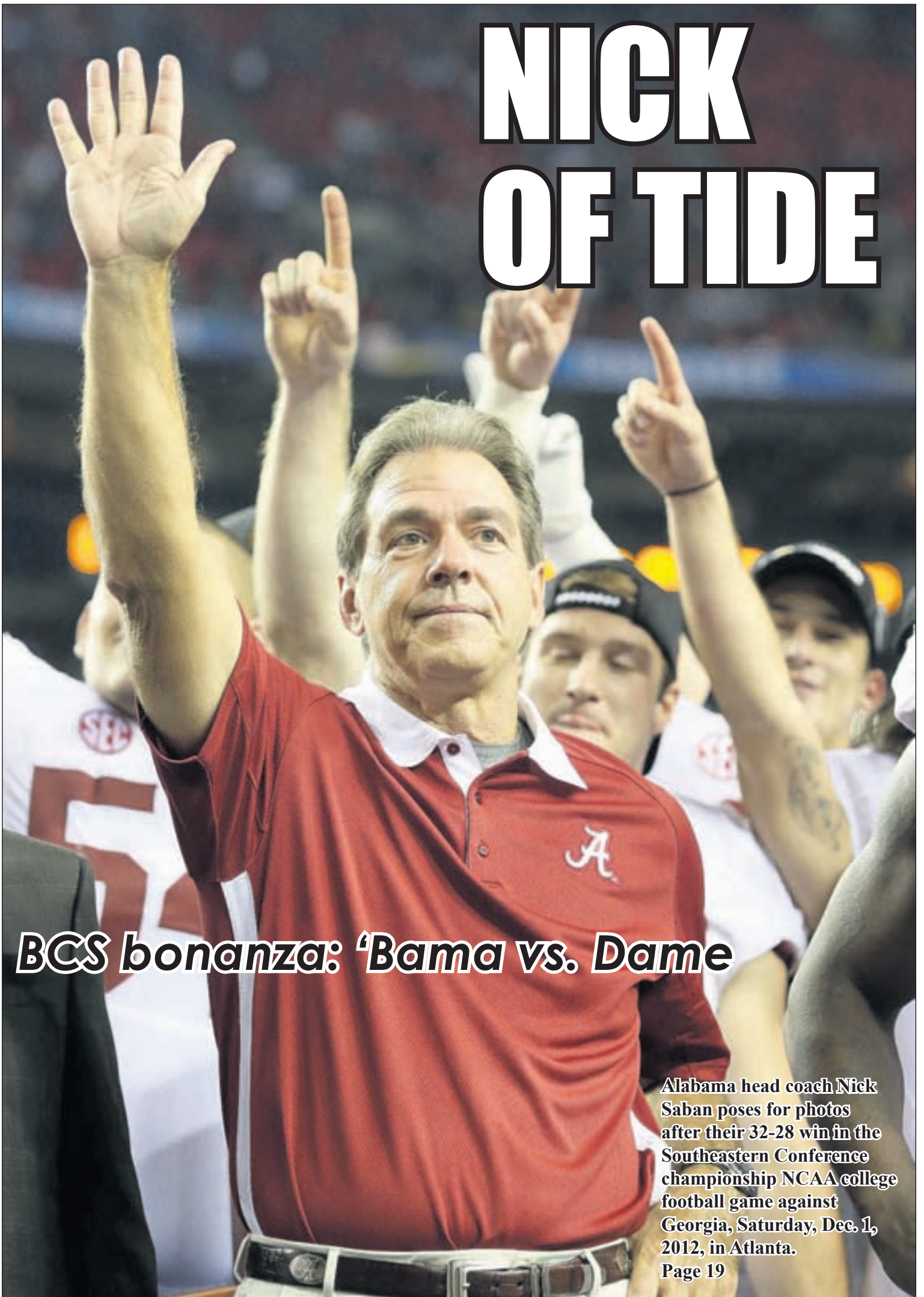
This was his second straight lopsided GS victory, too, leaving the field to wonder how to catch him — or even if they can.

Wait, there's more. The technical specialist known as "Shred" has been swift in speed events, too.

So much so that all eyes are on him as he's steadily emerged as an overall title contender. Keep this up and the crown belonging to reigning champion Marcel Hirscher of Austria may be in jeopardy.

Continued on Next Page

NICK OF TIDE



BCS bonanza: 'Bama vs. Dame

Alabama head coach Nick Saban poses for photos after their 32-28 win in the Southeastern Conference championship NCAA college football game against Georgia, Saturday, Dec. 1, 2012, in Atlanta.

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Ligety

Continued from Page 17

"At the moment, it is very, very hard to beat Ted," said Hirscher, who finished runner-up Sunday on the tricky Birds of Prey course. To think, the prevailing perception of Ligety coming into the season was this: Exceptional giant slalom tactician. But hardly a realistic title contender.

With every run he takes, though, the 28-year-old Ligety is rapidly changing that notion. He now trails overall leader Aksel Lund Svindal of Norway by only 80 points.

No one really figured he would be this close after seven races.

No one except for himself, of course.

A rigorous offseason fitness program and plenty of training passes on the slopes in Chile put him on this path.

"Winning the overall has been a big goal of mine since I started ski racing," Ligety said. "And it is attainable."

But it won't be easy with the way Svindal's skiing right now. The powerful Norwegian is always near the top of the leaderboard in every race. So far this season, Svindal has won two competitions and placed in the top 10 in three more.

"If he keeps that up, Aksel's going to be near impossible to beat," said Ligety, who won Olympic gold in the combined at the 2006 Winter Games in Turin, Italy. Then again, if Ligety maintains what he's doing in the GS, he could be as well. He's certainly been the quickest to master the new skis.

The International Ski Federation changed the hourglass shape of the GS skis this season to make the discipline safer. And no one has taken to the new setup better than Ligety, who's won both GS races this season by a combined margin of 4.51 seconds. That's a landslide in skiing.

"Ted is on another level," said Italy's Davide Simioncelli, who finished third in the GS on Sunday. "We just hope that he'll make mistakes." □



Ted Ligety of the United States, is airborne on the course during the men's World Cup downhill ski race in Beaver Creek, Colo., on Friday, Nov. 30, 2012.
Associated Press

WINTERBERG, Germany

(AP) — Lolo Jones has survived her first bobsled crash.

The Olympic hurdler and

first-year bobsled push athlete was in a sled that tipped over during a training run Monday for this weekend's World Cup stop

Lolo Jones survives first bobsled crash



Lolo Jones, of the United States, waits after a 10th-place finish with teammate Elana Meyers during the women's bobsled World Cup event in Whistler, British Columbia, on Friday, Nov. 23, 2012.
Associated Press

in Winterberg, Germany. Jones and driver Elana Meyers were not hurt.

Jones said on Twitter that going through the crash made her realize "God is real. I saw him today and he said come back later."

Bobsled crashes are not unusual, especially in training runs when drivers are trying to master unfamiliar tracks. Jones handled it with humor. When people at the track asked how she was, Jones said she asked them to bring her a mirror so she could check her face.

Jones wrote, "Forget my legs and arms. I'm still single!" □

Hockey talks resume Tuesday with owners, players

IRA PODELL

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The cast of characters in the ongoing NHL labor saga is about to get a bit of a makeover, at least for one day.

So far, Commissioner Gary Bettman and the league's negotiating committee have failed to hammer out a new collective bargaining agreement with the players' association — led by executive director Donald Fehr — that would end the long lockout that is threatening to wipe out the entire season.

After a few days of wrangling, following the conclusion of talks between the sides and a pair of federal mediators, the NHL and the union agreed on parameters for talks that will keep the respective leaders on the outside. On Tuesday, six owners will meet with six players in New York to try to find some more common ground.

Bettman proposed such a meeting on Wednesday when talks broke down and the mediators left the process. Originally, the thought was that only owners and players would get together for the next round of discussions, but the roster was expanded on Sunday to include staff members and counsel on each side.

While the final lineup wasn't

announced on Sunday, it is likely that deputy commissioner Bill Daly will participate with the NHL, along with union special counsel Steve Fehr.

Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh Penguins), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg Jets), Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames), Jeremy Jacobs (Boston Bruins), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto Maple Leafs) and Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay Lightning) will take part in the talks for the league, Daly said.

"No further details have been confirmed at this point," Daly said in a statement announcing the meeting. "We will provide further details when available and as appropriate."

Six players will be picked for the meeting, but that list wasn't announced on Sunday. Neither the NHL nor the players' association had input on who would attend on the opposite side.

All games through Dec. 14 have already been wiped off the schedule, along with the outdoor Winter Classic on New Year's Day and All-Star Weekend that was slated for January in Columbus, Ohio.

The lockout reached its 78th day on Sunday, and at best, there will only be a shortened season if there is any hockey at all.

Many conditions needed to be worked out before

this meeting could be scheduled. The sides were in contact over the weekend and finally saw eye to eye on Sunday night. Now they need to figure out how to break through on the financial issues and player contracting disputes that are keeping them apart and putting the entire season at risk.

The union has allowed any players who wanted to attend previous bargaining sessions to come, but the NHL has limited which owners could take part.

"The NHLPA has agreed to a meeting on Tuesday in New York that should facilitate dialogue between players and owners," Donald Fehr said in a statement. "There will be owners attending this meeting who have not previously done so, which is encouraging and which we welcome. We hope that this meeting will be constructive and lead to a dialogue that will help us find a way to reach an agreement."

Jacobs, considered one of the hardline owners, and Edwards are the only members of the group of six to have taken part in previous negotiations.

The New York Post reported Sunday that Madison Square Garden chairman James Dolan wanted to be included in the talks, as he was last year during the NBA lockout, but he wasn't picked. The Post said that Dolan, who was part of the NBA owners' negotiating committee, hasn't had a personal relationship with Bettman since at least 2007. Dolan's New York Rangers were listed as the NHL's second-most valuable franchise this week, according to Forbes magazine, at \$750 million — \$250 million behind the Toronto Maple Leafs, the first hockey team to be valued at \$1 billion. Forbes said that the Rangers were the second-most profitable franchise, behind Toronto, generating \$74 million of the league's \$3.4 billion income. □



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Blockbuster Bowl main event, with iffy undercard

RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Football Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — The penultimate Bowl Championship Series gave college football a national championship matchup low on controversy and loaded with star power.

No. 1 Notre Dame against No. 2 Alabama in Miami on Jan. 7 for the national title. No complaints.

That Fiesta Bowl with No. 5 Oregon against No. 7 Kansas State looks good, too. After that, well, you can see why so many fans are so eager to get rid of the BCS.

No. 4 Florida goes to the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans to face No. 22 Louisville, a Big East team that was unranked as recently as last week.

Then again, at least the Cardinals are ranked. Big Ten champion Wisconsin will be the first five-loss team to play in the Rose Bowl when it faces No. 8 Stanford in Pasadena, Calif.

Then there's the Orange Bowl in Miami, where No. 13 Florida State will face No. 16 Northern Illinois, the Mid-American Conference champion that took advantage of the lackluster Big Ten and Big East champions to slip into the BCS with a 12-1 record.

"It's a great story," Orange CEO Eric Poms said Sunday night, trying to put the best spin possible on a matchup that looks like a potential mismatch. "I think we'll be just fine."

Meanwhile, here are the teams that won't be playing in the BCS

— No. 3 Ohio State. The Buckeyes' postseason ban helped put the Badgers in the Rose Bowl.

— No. 6 Georgia, No. 9 LSU, No. 10 Texas A&M and No.



Alabama players, from left, Nick Perry, Jeremy Shelley, and Carson Tinker celebrate after their 32-28 win in the Southeastern Conference championship NCAA college football game against Georgia, Saturday, Dec. 1, 2012, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

11 South Carolina couldn't get in because of the rule that permits no more than two teams from one conference.

— No. 12 Oklahoma was all but a lock for the Sugar Bowl, before NIU took the backdoor to being a BCS buster. "We're 12-1," Northern Illinois quarterback Jordan Lynch told ESPN. "We faced tons of adversity this year. We won tons of games. ... We definitely deserve to be in there."

Maybe the Huskies can become this year's Boise State and shock the Seminoles. The fear is the team that lost to Iowa and barely beat Kansas will be more like the Hawaii version of BCS buster — a 41-10 loss to Georgia in the 2008 Sugar Bowl — than the Utah-kind. The Utes beat Alabama 31-17 in the '09 Sugar Bowl.

If the undercard doesn't look like much, the main event has the making of a potential blockbuster.

"The tradition of Alabama and Notre Dame brings special attention to it, but

we're just trying to be the best team on Monday, Jan. 7," Notre Dame coach Brian Kelly said Sunday.

The Irish clinched their spot a week ago in Los Angeles by completing a perfect regular season against rival Southern California.

Alabama earned its spot Saturday, beating Georgia 32-28 in a thrilling Southeastern Conference title game.

The program that coach Paul Bryant turned into an SEC behemoth in the 1960s and '70s, winning five national championships and sharing another during his tenure, is again dominating college football with a modern-day version of the Bear leading the way in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

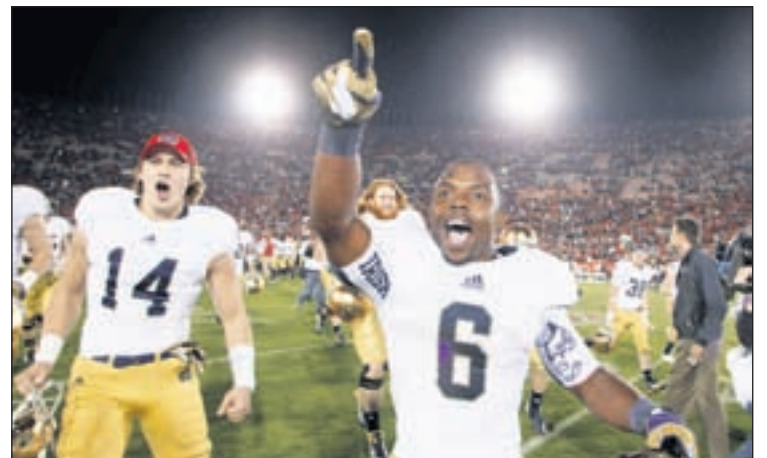
Coach Nick Saban and the Crimson Tide are on the verge of one of the great runs in history. Alabama would become the first team to repeat as champs since the BCS was implemented in 1998, and it would be the 11th time a team has won consecu-

Notre Dame three years ago, he looked at Alabama and the SEC, which has won six straight BCS titles, and decided the Irish needed to play like that.

Kelly built his reputation and winning teams at previous stops on fast-paced spread offenses. In South Bend, Ind., he has put the fight back in the Irish, who have won eight AP national titles — only Alabama has as many — but none since 1988.

Notre Dame has allowed the fewest touchdowns in the country (10) and is sixth overall in total defense (286 yards per game).

"It's clear that the formation of any great program is going to be on its defense,"



Notre Dame running back Theo Riddick, right, and wide receiver Luke Massa, left, celebrate after Notre Dame defeated Southern California 22-13 in an NCAA college football game, Saturday, Nov. 24, 2012, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

tive AP titles since the poll started in 1936. Alabama is already one of seven programs to repeat. The Tide has done it twice. Notre Dame is another.

Alabama also won the 2009 BCS championship under Saban. The last team to win three major national titles in four seasons was Nebraska, which went back-to-back in 1994 and '95 and finished No. 1 in the final coaches' poll in 1997. When Kelly was hired at

Kelly said. "If you play great defense you've got a chance. For us to move Notre Dame back into national prominence we had to develop a defense."

In two years, college football switches to a four-team playoff to determine its champion, and a new way of filling the other marquee bowls. It probably won't cure everything that ails the postseason, but it's safe to say many won't miss the BCS. □

LeBron James chosen as SI's Sportsman of the Year

TIM REYNOLDS
AP Sports Writer

MIAMI (AP) — When LeBron James learned he was Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Year, the Miami Heat star was surprised.

Not because he thought his achievements in 2012 weren't worthy, but because he figured what happened in 2010 was still holding him back.

Apparently, that's no longer the case. The magazine announced its annual choice Monday, with James becoming the first NBA player to win the award since Heat teammate Dwyane Wade in 2006.

"I remember just like yesterday when I signed here and basically, like the roof caved in," James told The Associated Press, referring to the fallout from his infamous "Decision" to leave Cleveland for Miami in 2010.



This image provided by Sports Illustrated shows the cover of the Dec. 10, 2012 issue, on sale now, featuring LeBron James who has been named the Sports Illustrated Sportsman of the Year 2012.
Associated Press

"To see that I and my team and everyone around me was able to patch that roof up, to come to this point, to come to this point and receive such a prestigious award, it's huge."

Past winners include Muhammad Ali, Jack Nick-

laus, Wayne Gretzky, Arthur Ashe, Tom Brady, Derek Jeter and Michael Phelps. College basketball coaches Mike Krzyzewski — James' Olympic coach — and Pat Summitt shared the honor last year.

Time Inc. Sports Group editor Paul Fichtenbaum said one thing separating James this year was that when Miami needed him most "he came up the biggest."

In particular, Game 4 of the second-round series at Indiana and Game 6 of the Eastern Conference finals at Boston.

"LeBron kind of made it easy on us," Fichtenbaum said. "In a year that had really high standards, he just stood taller than everybody else."

James won essentially all he could win in 2012: He became an NBA champion for the first time, won the NBA Finals MVP trophy,

helped the U.S. win Olympic gold for the second time and picked up his third NBA MVP award.

Fichtenbaum said James was the choice not only for his play but also because of his charitable work, especially involving schoolchildren in his native Akron, Ohio.

"I do think there has been some sort of closure — maybe not entirely in Cleveland, but across the nation," Fichtenbaum said. "LeBron's jerseys are now the No. 1-selling jerseys. I think there's a reason for that. I think people really appreciate him for everything he can do."

This is the 18th time James will be on SI's cover, the magazine said. His first time was as a high school junior in February 2002, when the magazine famously dubbed him "The Chosen One" and touted how he would have been an NBA

lottery pick even then.

The first 17 covers were different: Only this one has James wearing an NBA championship ring.

James said the sportsman honor was humbling considering this was the year in which Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps, Gabby Douglas and Missy Franklin starred at the London Olympics, Miguel Cabrera became baseball's first Triple Crown winner in 45 years and Roger Federer captured Wimbledon for the seventh time.

"Do I need it? I don't need it," James said. "I don't ever look for individual accolades. I do what I do because I love it and I want to continue to get better at it."

The Dec. 10 issue of SI is out Wednesday, the same day James will be honored at the magazine's Sportsman of the Year awards gala in New York. □

Magic beat Dwight Howard's Lakers in reunion 113-103

NBA Roundup

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Arron Afflalo scored 30 points, and Glen Davis added 23 points and 12 rebounds as the Orlando Magic beat Dwight Howard in their first game against their long-time center, stunning the Los Angeles Lakers 113-103 on Sunday.

Howard had 21 points and 15 rebounds against his former team, but the rebuilding Magic rallied impressively for a 40-point fourth quarter for just their fourth win in 14 games, snapping a three-game skid.

Orlando did it partly by intentionally fouling Howard, who went 9 for 21 at the line — including 7 for 14 in the fourth quarter.

Kobe Bryant scored 34 points for the Lakers, who dropped to 3-4 under new coach Mike D'Antoni with

another inconsistent performance with deficient defense. Metta World Peace scored 15 points, and Pau Gasol added 11.

Jameer Nelson had 19 points and 13 assists after nearly sitting out with tendonitis during the Magic's most impressive win under new coach Jacque Vaughn. Orlando also started a stretch of five road games in eight days with just its second road win all season.

New York's Carmelo Anthony scored 34 points, helping the Knicks beat the Phoenix Suns 106-99 for their third consecutive win to remain unbeaten at home.

Raymond Felton had 23 points, seven assists and no turnovers for the Knicks, who are 7-0 at Madison Square Garden and 12-4

overall, a half-game behind Miami for the best record in the Eastern Conference. The point guard was hurting after the game. He went for an MRI exam that revealed a bone bruise in his swollen left hand.

Tyson Chandler finished with 15 points and 13 rebounds. The Knick also shook off the first ejection of Rasheed Wallace's comeback — after a mere 1:25 of playing time — that left them short-handed. Jason Kidd missed a fourth straight game with lower back spasms.

Marcin Gortat had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Suns, who dropped their third straight and fell to 1-4 on their season-high, six-game road trip that ends Tuesday in Memphis. Shannon Brown scored 17 points. □



Orlando Magic forward Arron Afflalo, right, puts up a shot as Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant defends during the second half of their NBA basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 2, 2012, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

LeMond wants to run UCI after Armstrong scandal

ROB HARRIS
AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — A group of the UCI's fiercest critics called for the president to step aside Monday, and asked three-time Tour de France winner Greg LeMond to put himself forward to run cycling in the interim. LeMond said after Change Cycling Now's inaugural meeting that International Cycling Union President Pat McQuaid can't remain in his job while a panel examines possible links between the organization and the doping case involving Lance Armstrong. "I would love to be part of the process of change and if that means as interim president then I would be willing to do that," LeMond said. "I said if we can't find anyone more qualified," the

51-year-old American added. "I will do whatever I can to help change the sport. I am definitely not pushing myself ... cycling needs radical change, it needs new leadership." The sport is reeling from its most damaging scandal in which Armstrong was stripped of his seven Tour titles among other victories and banned for life after a damning report by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. Pre-empting the Change Cycling Now meeting in London, the UCI announced Friday that a three-man panel will scrutinize McQuaid and his predecessor Hein Verbruggen over their relations with Armstrong. McQuaid was elected president not long after Armstrong first retired in 2005, and Verbruggen is

now honorary president of the UCI. The governing body denies claims made by former Armstrong teammates to USADA that it covered up suspicious samples from Armstrong in exchange for payments totaling \$125,000, or that the American rider enjoyed special protection. But LeMond questioned how McQuaid and Verbruggen could remain in their roles until the panel, headed by a retired British judge, files its report in June. "During this investigation you can't have the fox guarding the henhouse, and that means they need to willingly step down — now," LeMond said. "Will they? Most likely not because they are protecting their own position. It will take pressure." LeMond said cycling must



Greg LeMond former winner of the Tour de France, speaks during a press conference held by Change Cycling in London, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012. Associated Press

be run by someone who is "beyond reproach." "We need to find a great leader who can take the sport forward and repair the damage that has been done," he said. Change Cycling Now is funded by sportswear company Skins, which is

suing the UCI for \$2 million after claiming its brand has been damaged by backing the sport as the Armstrong scandal unfolded. The International Olympic Committee executive board is this week discussing whether to strip Armstrong of his bronze medal from the 2000 Sydney Games.

"I still would love to see Armstrong come forward and reveal how, and I might even shake his hand if he would do this," LeMond said. "Because I think what he could offer is insight into really what was happening ... things don't happen by themselves. It was a huge effort by multiple people and he alone can reveal that. "It would be one redeeming thing he could do for cycling, because he has done a lot of damage for cycling." □

Ruppert, O'Day, White elected to baseball Hall

BEN WALKER
AP Baseball Writer

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AP) — Former New York Yankees owner Jacob Ruppert, longtime umpire Hank O'Day and barehanded catcher Deacon White were elected to the Hall of Fame on Monday for their excellence through the first half of the 20th century. The trio was picked by the Hall's pre-integration panel — part of what once was known as the Veterans Committee — and gave the shrine exactly 300 members. The announcement was made at baseball's winter meetings. Induction ceremonies will be held July 28 in Cooperstown, New York. They will be honored along with anyone chosen in January in voting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Ruppert bought the Yankees in 1915 and soon transformed them into baseball's most dominant team. He acquired Babe Ruth from the Boston Red Sox, built Yankee Stadium and presided over the club's first six World Series championships. "A lot of us thought he

was already in for all he'd done," said panel member Phil Niekro, the Hall of Fame pitcher. "We were surprised he wasn't." O'Day umpired in 10 World Series, including the first one in 1903. He worked 35 years and made one of the most famous calls in the game's history, ruling Fred Merkle out in a 1908 play that long lived in baseball lore. He was the 10th umpire to go into the Hall. White played from 1871-1890, starting out as a catcher without a glove and later moving to third base. He was a three-time RBIs leader, once topping the league with 49 RBIs when baseball hardly resembled the game it is today. Niekro credited two historians on the 16-person panel, Peter Morris and Tom Simon, with helping to illuminate the accomplishments of those who are long gone. "It's tough to go back into the 1800s and bring that to life," Niekro said. "It was so different then — five strikes, eight balls, batters can tell the pitcher where they want it. Can you imagine? I couldn't have done that if



In this Oct. 6, 1937 file photo, retired New York Yankee Babe Ruth, second from left, and his wife, left, greet Yankees owner Col. Jake Ruppert at the World Series opener, in New York. Associated Press

I tried, not with my knuckleball." Ruppert, O'Day and White all died in the 1930s — the first Hall class was selected in 1936. Hall of Famers Bert Blyleven, Don Sutton, Pat Gillick and Niekro were among the voters who considered 10 candidates. Former NL MVPs Marty Marion and Bucky Walters also were on the ballot. It took 75 percent (12 votes) for election. Ruppert and O'Day each got 15 votes and White drew 12. Bill Dahlen got 10 and Marion, Walters, Sam Breadon, Wes Ferrell, Tony Mullane and Alfred Reach each got three votes or less. □

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Health officials say flu season is off to its earliest start in nearly 10 years, and it could be a bad one.

(AP Photo/Jim Weber)

Flu season starts early

MIKE STOBBE

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Flu season is off to its earliest start in nearly 10 years — and it could be a bad one.

Health officials on Monday said suspected flu cases have jumped in five southern states, and the primary strain circulating is one that tends to make people sicker, especially the elderly. "It looks like it's shaping up to be a bad flu season, but only time will tell," said Dr. Thomas Frieden, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The good news is the nation seems to be fairly well prepared, Frieden said. More than a third of Americans have been vaccinated, and the vaccine is well matched to the strains of flu seen so far, CDC officials said.

Higher-than-normal reports of flu have come in from Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas. An uptick in flu cases like this usually doesn't occur until after Christmas.

It's not clear why the flu is showing up so early. But flu-related hospitalizations are rising earlier than usual, and there have already been two flu-related deaths in children.

In fact the last time a typical flu season started this early was the winter of 2003-04. That also happened to be a year when the dominant flu type was the same one seen most widely this year. And in that year, there were a higher-than-usual number of flu-related deaths in both the elderly and children.

One key difference: In 2003-04, the flu vaccine was a poor match to the flu strain. □

Study bolsters link between routine hits, brain disease

KEN BELSON

© 2012 New York Times

The growing evidence of a link between head trauma and long-term, degenerative brain disease was amplified in an extensive study of athletes, military veterans and others who absorbed repeated hits to the head, according to new findings published in the scientific journal *Brain*.

The study, which included brain samples taken posthumously from 85 people who had histories of repeated mild traumatic brain injury, added to the mounting body of research revealing the possible consequences of routine hits to the head in sports like football and hockey. The possibility that such mild head trauma could result in long-term cognitive impairment has come to vex sports officials, team doctors, athletes and parents in recent years. Of the group of 85 people, 80 percent (68 men) — nearly all of whom played sports — showed evidence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, a degenerative and

incurable disease whose symptoms can include memory loss, depression and dementia. Among the group found to have CTE, 50 were football players, including 33 who played in the NFL. Among them were stars like Dave Duerson,

players, nine college football players, seven pro boxers and four NHL players, including Derek Boogaard, the former hockey enforcer who died from an accidental overdose of alcohol and painkillers, also showed signs of CTE. The



A Player for the Washington Redskins is checked for injuries on the field. The NFL reported 154 concussions from practices or games from the preseason through the eighth week of the regular season. (AP Photo)

Cookie Gilchrist and John Mackey. Many of the players were linemen and running backs, positions that tend to have more contact with opponents.

Six high school football

study also included 21 veterans, most of whom were also athletes, who showed signs of CTE. The study was conducted by investigators at the Boston University Center for the Study of

Traumatic Encephalopathy and the Veterans Affairs Boston Healthcare System, in collaboration with the Sports Legacy Institute. It took four years to complete, included subjects ages 17 to 98, and more than doubled the number of documented cases of CTE. The investigators also created a four-tiered system to classify degrees of CTE, hoping it would help doctors treat patients. The volume of cases in the study "allows us to see the disease at all stages of severity and how it starts and spreads in the brain, which gives us an idea of the mechanism of the injury," said Ann McKee, the main author of the study, who is a professor of neurology and pathology at Boston University School of Medicine and works at the VA Boston. Those categorized as having Stage 1 of the disease had headaches and loss of attention and concentration, while those with Stage 2 also had depression, explosive behavior and short-term memory loss. □

Asperger's dropped from APA's revised DSM

LINDSEY TANNER

AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — The now familiar term "Asperger's disorder" is being dropped. And abnormally bad and frequent temper tantrums will be given a scientific-sounding diagnosis called DMDD. But "dyslexia" and other learning disorders remain.

The revisions come in the first major rewrite in nearly 20 years of the diagnostic guide used by U.S. psychiatrists. Changes were approved Saturday.

Full details of all the revisions will come next May when the American Psychiatric Association's new diagnostic manual is published, but the impact will be huge, affecting millions of children and adults worldwide. The manual also is important for the insurance industry in deciding what treatment to pay for, and it helps schools decide how to allot

special education.

This diagnostic guide "defines what constellations of symptoms" doctors recognize as mental disorders, said Dr. Mark Olfson, a Columbia University psychiatry professor. More important, he said, it "shapes who will receive what treatment. Even seemingly subtle changes to the criteria can have substantial effects on patterns of care."

Olfson was not involved in the revision process. The changes were approved Saturday in suburban Washington, D.C., by the psychiatric association's board of trustees.

The aim is not to expand the number of people diagnosed with mental illness, but to ensure that affected children and adults are more accurately diagnosed so they can

get the most appropriate treatment, said Dr. David Kupfer. He chaired the task force in charge of revising the manual and is a psychiatry professor at the University of Pittsburgh.

One of the most hotly argued changes was how to define the various ranges of autism. Some advocates opposed the idea of dropping the specific diagnosis for Asperger's disorder. People with that disorder often have high intelligence and vast knowledge on narrow subjects but lack social skills. Some who have the condition embrace their quirkiness and vow to continue to use the label.

And some Asperger's families opposed any change, fearing their kids would lose a diagnosis and no longer be eligible for special services. But the revision will not affect their education services, experts say. □



Full details of all the revisions of the American Psychiatric Association's new diagnostic manual will come next May, but the impact will be huge, affecting millions of children and adults worldwide. (Photo)

Clashes over Internet rules to mark Dubai meeting

BRIAN MURPHY

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.N.'s top telecommunications overseer sought Monday to quell worries about greater Internet controls emerging from global talks in Dubai, but any attempts for major Web regulations will likely face stiff opposition from groups led by a high-powered U.S. delegation. The 11-day conference, seeking to update codes last reviewed when the Web was virtually unknown, highlights the fundamental shift from tightly managed telecommunications networks to the borderless sweep of the Internet. Some at the Dubai conference, including a 123-member U.S. delegation with envoys from tech giants such as Google Inc. and Microsoft Corp., worry that any new U.N. oversight could be used by nations such as China and Russia to justify further tightening of Web blocks and monitoring. "Love the free and open

Internet? Tell the world's governments to keep it that way," said a message on the main search page of Google.com with a link for comments directed to the Dubai conference, which opened Monday.

The agenda for the gathering of more than 1,900 participants from 193 nations covers possible new rules for a broad range of services such as the Internet, mobile roaming fees and satellite and fixed-line communications. Questions include how much sway the U.N. can exert over efforts such as battling cyber-crimes and expanding the Internet into developing nations.

The secretary-general of the U.N. International Telecommunications Union, Hamadoun Toure, said that accusations that the meeting could limit Web freedoms are "completely untrue" and predicted only "light-touch" regulations.

"Many countries will come to reaffirm their desire to see freedom of expression embedded in this confer-



This March 9, 2011, file photo, shows a large image of Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, UAE Prime Minister and ruler of Dubai, rear left, and Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, UAE President, right, on a tower at Internet City, as cars pass drive on Sheikh Zayed's highway in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press

ence," he told reporters. But the head of the American contingent, Ambassador Terry Kramer, said the U.S. would propose taking all Internet-related discussions off the table and concentrating on already

regulated services such as phone networks.

"What we don't want to do is bring in all the private networks, the Internet networks, the government networks, etc.," he told The Associated Press. "That opens

the door to censorship."

The outcome of the Dubai gathering is far from certain. More than 900 proposed regulatory changes have been proposed, but details have not been made public. □

Study shows growth in second screen users

DAVID BAUDER

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Many U.S. viewers are becoming more active while watching television, judging by the findings in a new report that illustrates the explosive growth in people who watch TV while connected to social media on smartphones and tablets. The Nielsen company said that one in three people using Twitter in June sent messages at some point about the content of television shows, an increase of 27 percent from only five months earlier. And that was before the Olympics, which was probably the first big event to illustrate the extent of second screen usage.

"Twitter has become the second screen experience for television," said Deirdre Bannon, vice president of

social media at Nielsen.

Social networking is becoming so pervasive that the study found nearly a third of people aged 18-to-24 reported using the sites while in the bathroom.

An estimated 41 percent of tablet owners and 38 percent of smartphone owners used their device while also watching television at least once a day, Nielsen said.

That percentage hasn't changed much; in fact, 40 percent of smartphone owners reported daily dual screen usage a year earlier, Nielsen said. The difference is that far more people own these devices and they are using them for a longer period of time. The company estimated that Americans spent a total of 157.5 billion minutes on mobile devices in July 2012, nearly doubling the 81.8 billion the same month a year earlier.

"There are big and interesting implications," Bannon said. "I think both television networks and advertisers are onto it."

The social media can provide networks with real-time feedback on what they are doing. The performance of moderators at presidential debates this fall was watched more closely than perhaps ever before, because people were instantly taking on Twitter to provide their own critiques. It also makes for some conflicting information: Twitter buzzed with complaints last summer about NBC's policy of airing many Olympics events from London on tape delay, yet ratings for the prime-time Olympics telecast soared past expectations.

The increase in people watching television and commenting about it online



In this July 6, 2011, file photo, President Barack Obama sits in front of a screen displaying a question he tweeted during a "Twitter Town Hall" in the East Room of the White House in Washington. Associated Press

would seem to run counter to another big trend this fall: more people recording programs and watching them at a later hour. Those contrary trends both increase the value of live event programming like awards shows or sporting events.

The Nielsen study also found that 35 percent of people who used tablets while watching TV looked up information online about the program they

were watching. A quarter of tablet owners said they researched coupons or deals for products they saw advertised on television. As rapid as the use of social media while on television is growing in the United States, it already lags behind other countries. Nielsen said that 63 percent of people in the Middle East or Africa report using social media while on TV, and 52 percent of people in Latin America. □

Stocks edge lower after weak manufacturing report

STEVE ROTHWELL
AP Business Writer
NEW YORK (AP) —

Stocks edged lower on Wall Street Monday after a surprisingly weak manufacturing report heightened concern that fiscal deadlock in Washington is already hurting the economy.

The Dow Jones industrial average fell 59.98 points, or 0.5 percent, to close at 12,965.60. The Standard and Poor's 500 dropped 6.72 points to 1,409.46. The Nasdaq composite was down 8.04 points to 3,002.20.

U.S. manufacturing declined in November to its weakest level since July 2009, the Institute for Supply Management reported. The ISM's index fell to 49.5 from 51.7 a month earlier, below the 51.2 reading forecast by analysts. Any number below 50 on the scale means that manufacturing is contracting. Businesses expressed concerns about the "fiscal cliff," a series of sharp government spending cuts and tax increases scheduled to start Jan. 1 unless an agreement is reached to cut the budget deficit. "The ISM numbers probably took a little air out of what was some hope for better news on where the economy is going," said Jim Dunigan, executive vice president at PNC Wealth Management in Philadelphia. "We're still in the camp that this gets resolved and we don't go

over the cliff, but there's a lot of angst between now and then." The White House and Congress are still seeking to hammer out a budget deal that will avoid the "cliff." Republicans, led

trillion in higher taxes over a decade, a possible extension of the temporary Social Security payroll tax cut and heightened presidential power to raise the national debt limit. House Republi-



Employees work at Generac Power Systems, Inc., one of the largest makers of residential generators in the U.S., in Whitewater, Wis. A survey shows U.S. manufacturing shrank in November to its weakest level since July 2009, the first month after the Great Recession ended. Worries about automatic tax increases in the New Year cut demand for factory orders and manufacturing jobs. (AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh)

by House Speaker John Boehner, have balked at President Barack Obama's opening proposal of \$1.6

cans on Monday proposed their own 10-year blueprint to President Barack Obama that calls for increasing the

eligibility age for Medicare and lowering cost-of-living hikes for Social Security benefits. "There's a sense of insecurity until the President and Boehner get their act together," said Ben Schwarz, chief market strategist at New York-based brokerage Lightspeed Financial. "If they put together a package in short order, if they do it in the next couple of weeks, you'll see a strong rally." Stocks have fluctuated since the Nov. 6 election as investors worried that a deal may not be reached in time to avoid the tax hikes and spending cuts, which economists say could push the U.S. back into recession. The S&P 500 is still 1.3 percent below its closing level on the day that Americans went to the polls, having fallen as much as 5 percent in the weeks following the election. Wall Street opened higher Monday following news that manufactur-

ing in China, the world's second-largest economy, grew for the first time in 13 months and after Greece announced details of a bond buyback program. The Dow had been up as much as 62 points shortly after the opening bell. December is historically the best month for stocks. The S&P 500 has advanced an average of 2 percent over the past 30 years during the month of December, according to research from Schaeffer's Investment Research. The next best month is April, with an average return of 1.7 percent. The worst month is September, where investors lose an average of 0.7 percent. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose 1 basis point to 1.62 percent. Other stocks making big moves: —Dell rose 42 cents, or 4.4 percent, to \$10.06 after Goldman Sachs raised its rating to "Buy" from "Sell." □

Oracle to pay 3 of 2013's dividends this year

SARAH SKIDMORE
AP Business Writer

PORTLAND, Oregon (AP) — Oracle Corp. will pay three of next year's quarterly dividends this year in an apparent attempt to avoid possible tax hikes for its investors. The software company said Monday that it will pay dividends for the second, third and fourth quarters of 2013,

totaling 18 cents per share, on Dec. 21 to shareholders of record as of Dec. 14. Oracle is the latest of a string of companies that have moved up quarterly payouts or issued a special end-of-year payment to protect investors from potentially having to pay higher taxes on dividend income starting in January. Since

2003 investors have paid a maximum 15 percent on dividend income. But that historically low rate will expire in January unless Congress and President Barack Obama reach a compromise on taxes and government spending. As it stands, dividends will be taxed as ordinary income in 2013, the same as wag-

es, so rates will go up depending on which income bracket a taxpayer is in. For the highest earners, the dividend rate would jump to 43.4 percent. Oracle said that its CEO Larry Ellison, who is also the company's largest shareholder, did not participate in the vote leading to this decision. □

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Pfizer laying off some US sales teams

NEW YORK (AP) — Drug-maker Pfizer Inc. is starting another round of layoffs, targeting U.S. sales representatives who promote Pfizer primary care medicines to doctors. The New York-based Viagra maker isn't giving details on how many salespeople it employs, how many will leave or when that will happen. Individual salespeople haven't been notified whether they'll be furloughed. A Pfizer spokesman confirms changes are coming but says details about the sales force are proprietary. In a statement, the world's biggest drug-maker says it continually evaluates how to be more efficient and best allocate money and staff to serve customers. □

Saputo to buy US dairy corp. Morningstar

MONTREAL (AP) — Canadian cheese maker Saputo Inc. is bolstering its position in the United States by pursuing the largest acquisition in its history, a \$1.45 billion deal to buy Morningstar Foods. Montreal-based Saputo said Monday it is expanding its U.S. operations by adding dairy and non-dairy products to its current operations as a cheese manufacturer, distributor and exporter. The move effectively replicates the breadth of its operations in Canada, creating a U.S. division of comparable size. "This is only going to solidify our position as the No. 2 provider of dairy in North America," CEO Lino Saputo Jr. said. Morningstar has about 2,000 employees and 10 manufacturing plants in the United States. Following the acquisition, Saputo will have about 12,000 employees and 57 manufacturing plants in five countries. □

Storm delays lift already strong US auto sales

**DEE-ANN DURBIN
TOM KRISHER**

AP Auto Writers

DETROIT (AP) — Superstorm

Only General Motors was left struggling to explain its 3-percent sales gain and large inventory of unsold



A Toyota dealership sign glows over a car lot in Tustin Calif. A better economy and extra demand after Superstorm Sandy lifted U.S. auto sales in November.

(AP Photo/Chris Carlson)

Sandy gave an extra boost to already strong U.S. auto sales last month, although carmakers warned that uncertainty over the "fiscal cliff" could undo some of those gains.

Most major companies, from Toyota to Chrysler, posted impressive increases from a year earlier.

trucks.

Americans were already willing to buy a new car or truck last month because they're more confident in the economy. Home values are rising, hiring is up and auto financing is readily available. Also, the average age of a vehicle on U.S. roads is approaching

a record 11 years, so many people are looking to replace older cars.

Sandy just boosted that demand. The storm added 20,000 to 30,000 sales industry wide in November, mostly from people who planned to buy cars during the October storm but had to delay their purchases, Ford estimated. People who need to replace storm-damaged vehicles are expected to drive sales for several more months. GM estimates that 50,000 to 100,000 vehicles will eventually need to be replaced.

November sales, when calculated on an annual basis, are likely to be 15 million or more, the highest rate since March of 2008, according to LMC Automotive, a Detroit-area consulting firm. That's higher than the 14.3 million annual rate so far this year, even though November is normally a lackluster month due to cold weather and holiday anticipation. Both GM and Chrysler predicted November sales would run at an annual rate of 15.3

million.

If sales end up at 15 million for the year, it would be a vast improvement over the 10.4 million during the recession in 2009. Sales would still fall short of the recent peak of around 17 million in 2005.

But the ongoing "fiscal cliff" negotiations between Congress and the White House could still derail the industry's recovery. The term refers to sharp government spending cuts and tax increases scheduled to start Jan. 1 unless an agreement is reached to cut the budget deficit. Economists say that those measures, if implemented, could push the U.S. economy back into a recession.

"Exactly how much growth we can expect next year will depend in part on how Congress and the president resolve the fiscal cliff issue," said Kurt McNeil, GM's U.S. sales chief. "Markets and consumers hate uncertainty."

McNeil and other GM executives tried to explain the automaker's disappointing performance. □

US builders boost spending 1.4% in October

**MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. builders increased their spending on construction projects in October by the largest amount in five months, led by a surge in housing.

The Commerce Department said Monday that construction spending rose 1.4 percent in October. It was the largest gain since a 1.7 percent increase in May.

The increase raised spending to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$872.1 billion. That is nearly 17 percent higher than a 12-year low hit in February 2011.

Still, even with the gain, the level of spending on construction remains only about half of what's considered healthy.

Housing construction spending jumped 3 percent in October. Nonresi-

dential building rose 0.3 percent. The government said Superstorm Sandy,

New-home sales were still 17 percent higher in October than the same month a

and local government budgets.

The strong 3 percent increase in housing construction spending in October left the rate of annual spending 19 percent above the level of October 2011.

The housing market appears to be withstanding fears that the economy will go over a "fiscal cliff" next year without a budget deal to prevent tax increases and spending cuts from kicking in, said Paul Dales, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics. Dales noted that residential spending over the past three months has jumped at a 29 percent annual rate.

The pace of spending on nonresidential construction is now 10.7 percent above its level a year ago. Spending on hotel construction and shopping centers both rose in October. □



Ford Smith works on a new home under construction in Chicago. U.S. builders increased their spending on construction projects in October by the largest amount in five months, led by a surge in housing.

(AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh)

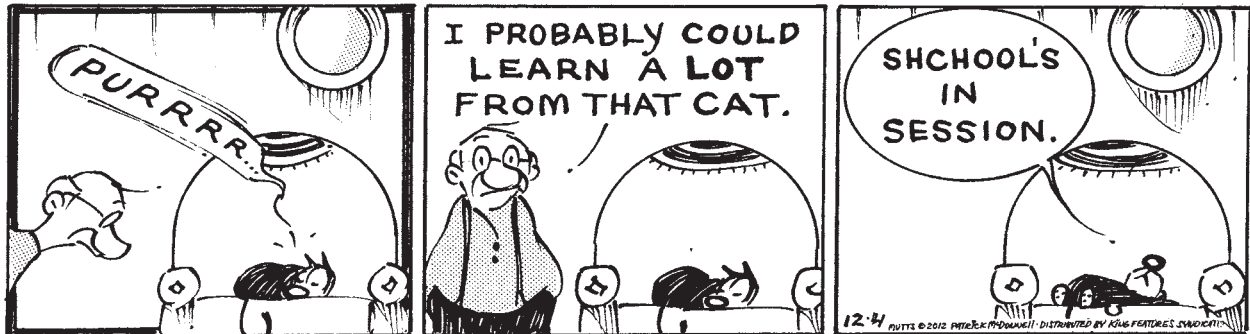
which hit in late October, had only a minimal effect on the figures.

Sales of new homes fell slightly in October, dragged lower by steep declines in the Northeast partly related to Superstorm Sandy.

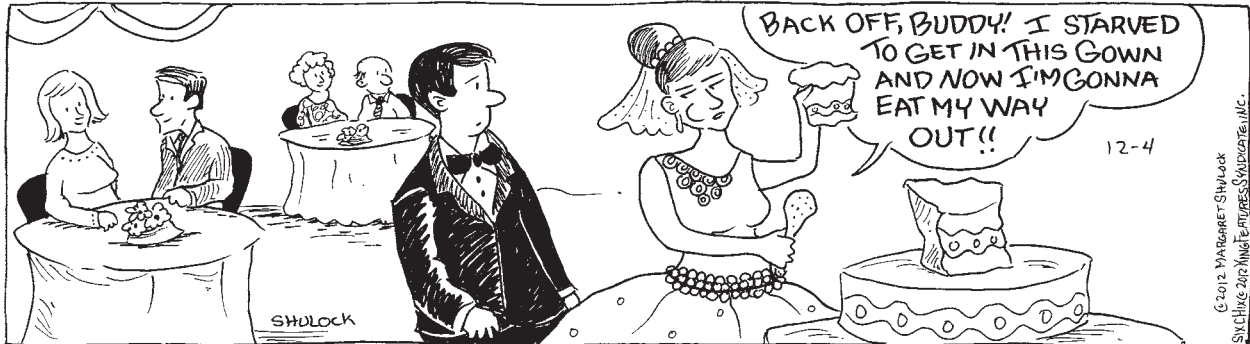
year ago.

Strength in home building has been one of the bright spots for the economy this year. But overall construction is still being offset by weakness in commercial real estate and tight state

Mutts



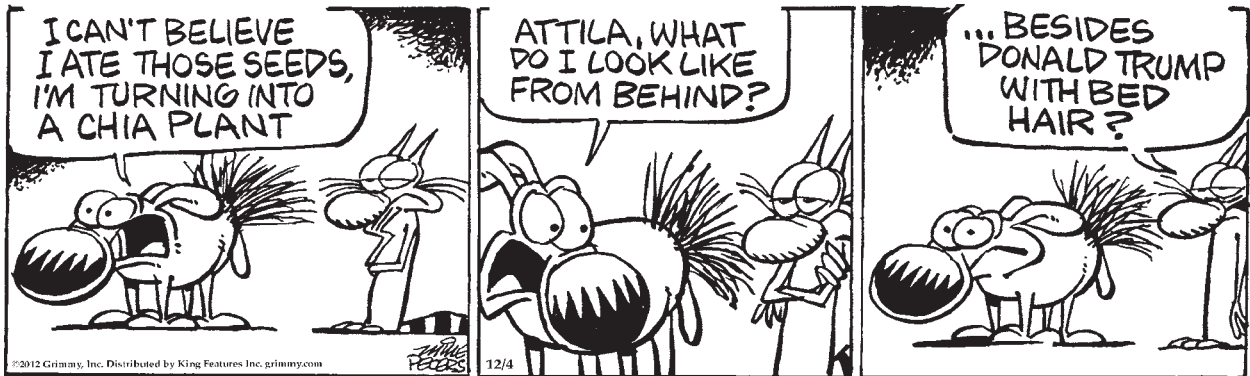
6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

8	9		1	2				
6	2					4		
				5			2	
9			7					
7		4				1		5
					6			4
	6			9				
		2					5	7
				7	1		3	8

Difficulty Level ★★

12/04

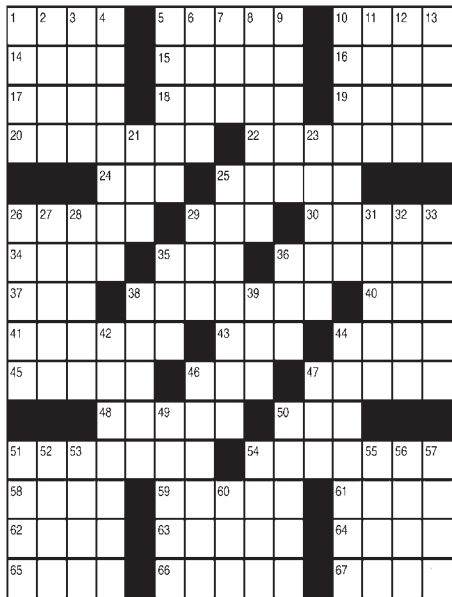
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

1	7	3	8	5	9	2	6	4
8	2	5	4	6	1	7	3	9
9	6	4	3	2	7	1	5	8
7	4	8	5	1	3	9	2	6
2	1	9	7	8	6	5	4	3
3	5	6	2	9	4	8	7	1
4	8	1	6	7	5	3	9	2
5	3	2	9	4	8	6	1	7
6	9	7	1	3	2	4	8	5

ACROSS

- 1 Ravel at the edges
5 Be generous
10 Old Roman garment
14 Oil and ___; car maintenance
15 Burr or Spelling
16 Grows gray
17 Cain's victim
18 Still whole
19 Pitfall
20 Marriage
22 Wobbles
24 Have debts
25 Wild
26 Frown
29 ___ Angeles, CA
30 GEICO spokesman
34 Corncocks
35 In favor of
36 Announce, as an arrival
37 Recipe verb
38 Horse trained for harness racing
40 eBay offer
41 Wiggle room
43 "Ode on a Grecian ___"
44 Ore deposit
45 Thin piece of leather
46 Not ___ longer; no more
47 Recluse
48 Rudely brief
50 Overall part
51 Source of defeat; enemy
54 Today
58 Skunk's defense
59 Fencing sword
61 Scrabble piece
62 Eye flirtatiously
63 Newspaper stand, perhaps
64 Actress Samms
65 Have to have
66 Schedule
67 Backside
- DOWN
- 1 Defect



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/4/12

Monday's Puzzle Solved

RUDE	SLINK	SCAR
OLES	TABOO	LOBO
ONES	ORIGINALLY	
MAS	WOKS	ANDES
	CORPS	ANT
SHAPES	RINSES	
HELEN	MOODY	MUD
IRAN	GUIDE	FARE
NOT	HALLE	RANGE
DEBATE	SOCCER	
	LIE	PATTI
ABDUL	BIDE	POT
CORRESPOND	JAVA	
HOUR	ORATE	ITEM
EMMY	TYSON	GENE

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12/4/12

- 39 Endeavor
42 Irrigated
44 Gang member
46 Attack
47 Tell a fib
49 Dangers
50 Actress Delta
51 Midday
52 Border
- 53 Burrowing animal
54 Examination
55 Thin coin
56 ___ mater; school one graduated from
57 2012, for one
60 Feathery scarf

TSA on defensive over hearings

JOE SHARKEY

© 2012 New York Times

Rep. Reid Ribble fixed witnesses assembled at a House aviation subcommittee hearing last Thursday with a baleful stare.

"I am very disappointed that the TSA was unwilling to come," said Ribble, a freshman Republican from Wisconsin. "I understand how uncomfortable these hearings can be for them, especially since we're talking about a lot of complaints today."

But part of their job is to let the American people know what they're doing."

The director of the Transportation Security Administration, John S. Pistole, had declined to testify before this particular subcommittee on two previous occasions, despite angry criticism from some members who are longtime agency critics. The reason, the agency later explained, is that oversight for the TSA resides in the House Homeland Security Committee – not the aviation subcommittee, which is a part of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The agency noted that in the 112th Congress alone, officials have testified at 38 hearings and provided 425 individual briefings.

So the TSA sat that one out last week – and got lambasted for it, at both the hearing and in some media accounts.

No one would argue that the TSA should not be held closely accountable. There have been too many problems. Since the agency was created in the aftermath of Sept. 11, this column has regularly reported on many of them, like the outrage that began in 2004 over charges that some screeners were groping female passengers. More recently, the agency faced questions about its decision to replace metal detectors with those whole-body image machines, which the TSA still has not adequately defended against allegations that they are personally invasive, arguably unsafe and ultimately not as reliable as good old metal



Some critics are calling for the Transportation Security Administration to be largely replaced by the kind of for-profit private security contractors that operated airport security before 9/11.
(Chris Gash/The New York Times)

detectors.

On the other hand, the subcommittee hearing last Thursday seemed to have one central agenda, which was that the TSA should be replaced by private security companies – you

know, like the ones that were accused of hiring poorly trained, underpaid screeners at airports before 9/11 brought a somewhat more intense focus to the question of checkpoint security. □

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TRACIE CONE

FRESNO, California (AP)

The researchers are a part of the 10-year Redwoods



Associated Press

But that was an anomaly, Sillett said. The President

Now at 93 feet (28 meters) in circumference and with 45,000 cubic feet (1,273 cubic meters) of trunk volume and another 9,000 cubic feet (255 cubic meters) in its branches, the tree named for President Warren G. Harding is about 15 percent larger than Grant, also known as America's Christmas Tree. Sliced into one-foot by one-foot cubes, The President would

"They're all superlative in their own way," Sillett said. □

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Rock and Roll Hall of Fame names new president-CEO

CLEVELAND (AP) — The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland has hired its new president and CEO from within its leadership ranks. The Rock Hall's vice president of development since 2008, Gregory Harris, was announced Monday as president and CEO. The 47-year-old Harris joined the Rock Hall from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York, where he was vice president of development. Terry Stewart announced in May that he would retire as Rock Hall president and CEO. Stewart has led the Rock Hall since 1999. Under Stewart's leadership, the Rock Hall improved its bottom line, renovated the museum and established a library and archives. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum opened in 1995 alongside Lake Erie. □



Retiring president and CEO of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Terry Stewart, left, poses with his successor, Gregory Harris in front of an exhibit at the rock hall in Cleveland Monday, Dec. 3, 2012.

Associated Press

12-12-12 Sandy benefit to be aired on 34 outlets



This April 17, 2012 file photo shows Chris Martin, lead singer of Coldplay, performing in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The 12-12-12 Hurricane Sandy benefit concert will be broadcast across 34 U.S. and international television, radio and Internet across six continents. Producers said in a Monday news release the concert will be available to 1 billion people across six continents. Eric Clapton and Coldplay have been added to an already stellar lineup on Dec. 12 at Madison Square Garden that also includes Bon Jovi, Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band, Paul McCartney, Kanye West, Billy Joel, Alicia Keys, Roger Waters and others. Proceeds from the benefit go to the Robin Hood Relief Fund, which is helping victims of Sandy in hard-hit New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The November storm killed dozens and did billions of dollars in damage across the area. □

NY Film Critics name 'Zero Dark Thirty' best film

JAKE COYLE

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Film Critics Circle named Kathryn Bigelow's "Zero Dark Thirty" the best film of 2012, voicing its strong support for the grimly journalistic Osama bin Laden docudrama. Bigelow, whose "Hurt Locker" won best picture at the Academy Awards in 2010, also won best director in the awards announced Monday, and Greg Fraser won for the film's cinematography. "'Zero Dark Thirty' confirms the massive talent of Kathryn Bigelow," said NYFCC chairman Joshua Rothkopf, a critic for Time Out New York. "'Zero Dark Thirty' is a very important movie. It's not triumphant and it's still a very significant dramatization of an important event.

And we were knocked out by the film." But the critics group also cast a loud vote for Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln," bestowing it with three awards: Daniel Day-Lewis for best actor, Sally Field for best supporting actress and Tony Kushner for best screenplay. Lewis' award for his performance as the 16th president is his fifth from the NYFCC. Rachel Weisz earned best actress from the critics for her performance in the little-seen "The Deep Blue Sea," a period drama by the British director Terence Davies. The supporting actor pick went to Matthew McConaughey for his performances as both a Texas district attorney in Richard Linklater's "Bernie" and as a male stripper in Steven Soderberg's "Magic Mike."

Shut out entirely were awards hopefuls "Les Misérables," "Argo," "Silver Linings Playbook" and "The Master." This year's Oscar hunt is generally seen as fairly open, with a number of strong contenders. The NYFCC voting could help coalesce support behind "Zero Dark Thirty" and "Lincoln." Rothkopf, though, said that there was strong passion in voting for several films that didn't yield an award. Michael Haneke's Palme d'Or-winning "Amour," a depiction of an aging married couple, took best foreign language film. Best non-fiction film went to "The Central Park Five," the documentary about the infamous 1989 New York rape case, co-directed



This undated publicity film image provided by Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. shows Joel Edgerton (left), and his brother Nash Edgerton, playing two of the SEAL Team Six soldiers as they fly a stealth blackhawk helicopter to raid Osama Bin Laden's compound in Columbia Pictures' gripping new thriller directed by Kathryn Bigelow, "Zero Dark Thirty."

Associated Press

by Ken Burns, his daughter Sarah Burns and David McMahon. Best animated film went to Tim Burton's "Frankenweenie." The AIDS activism documentary "How to Survive a Plague" was picked as best first feature. The New York Film Critics Circle, a body of 35 New York-based critics founded in 1935, announced their

annual vote on Twitter over a period of hours. Awards will be handed out at a ceremony Jan. 7. Next to come in the quickening awards season are the National Board of Review Awards on Wednesday and the Los Angeles Film Critics on Sunday. Golden Globe nominations will be announced Dec. 13. □

Lawyer: Shakira left no choice but \$100M lawsuit

NEW YORK (AP) — A lawyer for Shakira's ex-boyfriend Antonio de La Rua says the pop superstar didn't leave his client any other option but to file a New York lawsuit to demand she pay him \$100 million in compensation for managing her career.

William T. Reid IV says de la Rua tried to talk to Shakira about what he's owed but the Colombian singer refused. Reid said Monday his client "didn't really want to do this."

De la Rua is the son of former Argentine President Fernando de la Rúa. He dated Shakira for more than a decade, and they split last year. He filed the lawsuit Nov. 20.

Shakira's representative at the public relations company 42West and her at-



In this Dec. 18, 2008 file photo, Colombian pop singer Shakira, left, walks with Antonio De La Rua at her farm "La Colorada" in Jose Ignacio, Uruguay. Associated Press

orneys at the law firm Fox Horan & Camerini LLP haven't responded to requests for comment. □



Film director Tim Burton speaks at a press conference for his Disney film "Frankenweenie" as producer Allison Abbate smiles in Tokyo, Monday, Dec. 3, 2012. "Frankenweenie" is a stop-motion animated film, filmed in black and white and rendered in 3D.

Associated Press

'Guardians,' 'Ralph,' 'Brave' lead 40th annual Annie Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Rise of the Guardians," "Wreck-It Ralph," "Brave" and "Frankenweenie" are among the nominees for best animated feature at the 40th annual Annie Awards. Other best-picture nominees announced Monday are "ParaNorman," "Hotel Transylvania," "The

Pirates! Band of Misfits" and "The Rabbi's Cat." The Annie Awards recognize animated productions in 30 categories. "Rise of the Guardians," "Brave" and "Wreck-It Ralph" each have 10 bids. "Hotel Transylvania" and "ParaNorman" earned eight nods apiece. □



This Nov. 27, 2012 photo shows "Hot in Cleveland" co-stars, from left, Jane Leeves, Betty White, Valerie Bertinelli and Wendie Malick in New York. Their TV Land sitcom focuses on three slightly past their prime gal-pals from Los Angeles who decide to make a fresh start in Cleveland, where they rent a house whose caretaker, played by White, serves as their salty companion and foil.

Associated Press

Chatting with 'Hot in Cleveland's comedy quartet

FRAZIER MOORE
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sure, three's a crowd. But four is a hoot.

Just consider the stars of "Hot in Cleveland," four funny ladies who would look right at home carved in the Mount Rushmore of comedy. But rather than on a mountain ridge, this quartet was found one day last week at a tiny midtown Manhattan cafe whose other patrons looked on, bemused, at Valerie Bertinelli, Jane Leeves, Wendie Malick and, of course, Betty White huddled with a reporter at a corner banquette. Their TV Land sitcom, now in its fourth season and airing Wednesdays at 10 p.m. EST, focuses on three slightly past their prime gal-pals from Los Angeles who decide to make a fresh start in Cleveland (of all places!), where they rent a house whose caretaker, played by White, serves as their salty companion and foil.

Hilarity ensues. But not just on the show. Get these four women together and the laughter is nonstop. Which begs the question: When did each of them realize she was funny?

"I'm STILL waiting for that

realization," says Bertinelli with a laugh.

How's that? As a teen nearly 40 years ago she was lobbing punch lines on the hit sitcom "One Day at a Time," which ran on CBS for a decade. "But then I went on to do all these movies of the week. And after that, I would go up for roles on sitcoms and people would say, 'She doesn't do comedy, does she?' So I started to doubt myself."

Hard to believe, considering her exuberance and thunderous guffaws.

"She's our little cheerleader," says Malick.

"I'm excitable," Bertinelli, 52, confirms, "and what's so ironic is that, during the first season of 'One Day at a Time,' I was screamed at because I wasn't projecting enough." "Until my late 30s, I did all bad girls," says Malick. "Because I was tall, dark and imposing, I was always the murderer or the ex-wife or some nasty girl." Then in 1990 came the HBO comedy "Dream On," where she was cast as the psychologist ex-wife of series star Brian Benben. Soon enough the producers realized she was funny.

"I went from being the straight woman to being the more and more neurotic,"

Malick, 61, recalls. "By the end of the first season I had a total nervous breakdown. It was so freeing to just let it all out and run with it!" And from there she ran right into "Just Shoot Me," a long-running NBC comedy set at a fashion magazine, where she played a boozy, slutty former model.

"It happened for me at school," says Leeves, the British-born actress who spent 11 seasons as physical therapist Daphne Moon on NBC's "Frasier."

"I was geeky and tall and skinny," she says, "and the best way in with the other students was to make them laugh. I can remember doing fake lessons on the board before the teacher came in. I would have the class in stitches. And I would think: This is POWERFUL, I LIKE this!" "These girls can ALL make ME laugh," White reports. "And with THIS one" — she nods toward Leeves — "if we lock eyes for a moment on-stage, I'm gone!"

Leeves grins. "My back will be to you in a scene, and then I'll turn around and I'll go like this" — she flashes a little comic scowl at White, then swivels back again. White explodes with a helpless fit of giggles. □

More Babies, Please



ROSS DOUTHAT
© 2012 New York Times

In the eternally recurring debates about whether some rival great power will knock the United States off its global perch, there has always been one excellent reason to bet on a second American century: We have more babies than the competition.

It's a near-universal law that modernity reduces fertility. But compared with the swiftly aging nations of East Asia and Western Europe, the American birthrate has proved consistently resilient, hovering around the level required to keep a population stable or growing over the long run.

America's demographic edge has a variety of sources: our famous religiosity, our vast interior and wide-open spaces (and the four-bedroom detached houses they make possible), our willingness to welcome immigrants (who tend to have higher birthrates than the native-born). And it clearly is an edge. Today's babies are tomorrow's taxpayers and workers and entrepreneurs, and relatively youthful populations speed economic growth and keep spending commitments affordable. Thanks to our relative demographic dynamism, the America of 50 years hence may not only have more workers per retiree than countries like Japan and Germany, but also have more than emerging powers like China and Brazil.

If, that is, our dynamism persists. But that's no longer a sure thing. American fertility plunged with the stock market in 2008, and it hasn't recovered. Last week, the Pew Research Center reported that U.S. birthrates hit the lowest rate ever recorded in 2011, with just 63 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age. (The rate was 71 per 1,000 in 1990.) For the first time in recent memory, Americans are having fewer babies than the French or British.

The plunge might be temporary. American fertility plummeted during the Great Depression, and more recent downturns have produced modest dips as well. This time, the birthrate has fallen fastest among foreign-born Americans, and particularly among Hispanics, who saw huge amounts of wealth evaporate with the housing bust. Many people may simply be postponing childbearing until better times return, and a few years of swift growth could produce a miniature baby boom.

But deeper forces than the financial crisis may keep Ameri-

can fertility rates depressed. Foreign-born birthrates will probably gradually recover from their current nadir, but with fertility in decline across Mexico and Latin America, it isn't clear that the United States can continue to rely heavily on immigrant birthrates to help drive population growth.

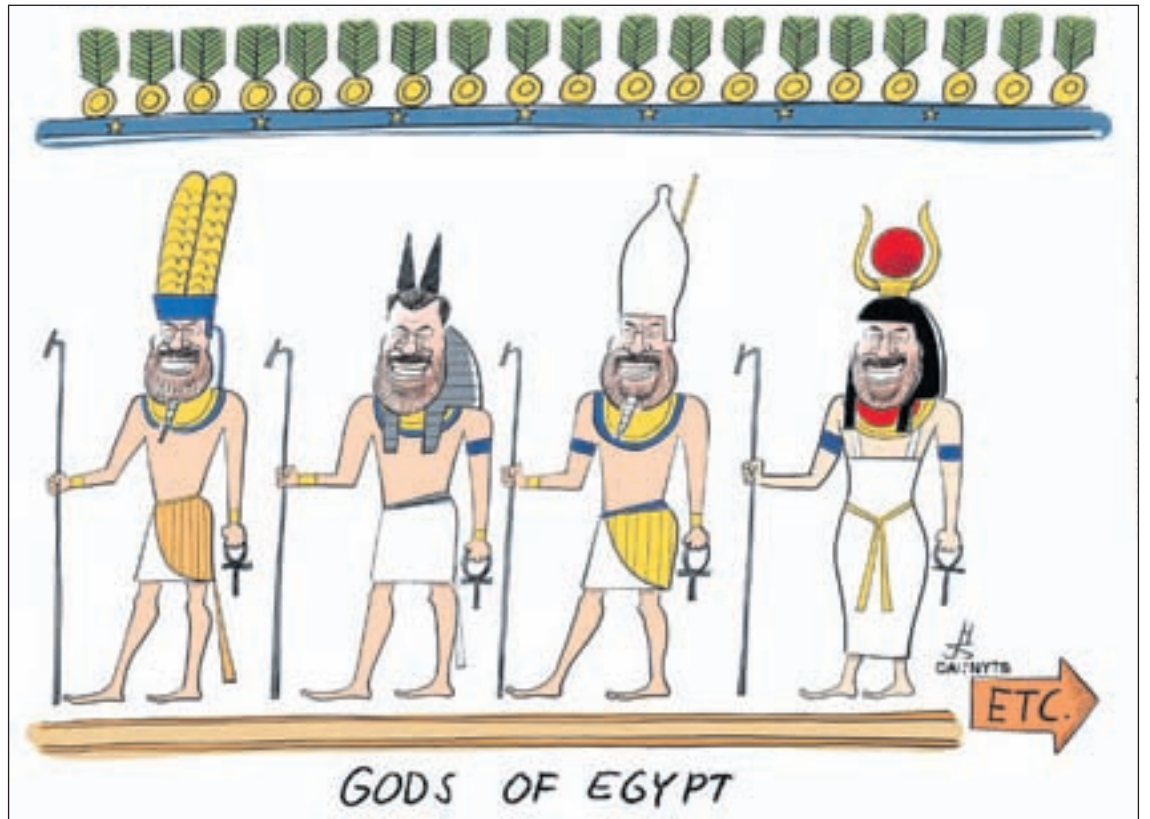
Among the native-born working class, meanwhile, there was a retreat from child rearing even before the Great Recession hit. For Americans without college degrees, economic instability and a shortage of marriageable men seem to be furthering two trends in tandem: more women are having children out of wedlock, and fewer are raising families at all.

Finally, there's been a broader cultural shift away from a child-centric understanding of romance and marriage. In 1990, 65 percent of Americans told Pew that children were "very important" to a successful marriage; in 2007, just before the current baby bust, only 41 percent agreed. (That trend goes a long way toward explaining why gay marriage, which formally severs wedlock from sex differences and procreation, has gone from a nonstarter to a no-brainer for so many people.) Government's power over fertility rates is limited, but not nonexistent. America has no real family policy to speak of at the moment, and the evidence from countries like Sweden and France suggests that reducing the ever-rising cost of having kids can help fertility rates rebound. Whether this means a more family-friendly tax code, a push for more flexible work hours, or an effort to reduce the cost of college, there's clearly room for creative policy to make some difference.

More broadly, a more secure economic foundation beneath working-class Americans would presumably help promote childbearing as well. Stable families are crucial to prosperity and mobility, but the reverse is also true, and policies that made it easier to climb the economic ladder would make it easier to raise a family as well.

Beneath these policy debates, though, lie cultural forces that no legislator can really hope to change. The retreat from child rearing is, at some level, a symptom of late-modern exhaustion — a decadence that first arose in the West but now haunts rich societies around the globe. It's a spirit that privileges the present over the future, chooses stagnation over innovation, prefers what already exists over what might be. It embraces the comforts and pleasures of modernity, while shrugging off the basic sacrifices that built our civilization in the first place.

Such decadence need not be permanent, but neither can it be undone by political willpower alone. It can only be reversed by the slow accumulation of individual choices, which is how all social and cultural recoveries are ultimately made. □



Here We Go: Let's Talk About X



DAVID BROOKS
© 2012 New York Times

In 1986, Democrats and Republicans came together and enacted a tax reform measure that closed loopholes and lowered tax rates. That was a great achievement. The '86 act has shaped thinking ever since. Now when people talk about tax reform, they instinctively say, "Let's do another '86-style act." When they debate tax ideas, they inevitably fixate on the two levers that were central back then: closing loopholes and changing top marginal rates.

The problem is that it's not 1986 anymore. We have a different set of problems. The two levers highlighted in that earlier reform are not powerful enough to help us address the issues we face today. The 1986 paradigm has become an intellectual straightjacket, foreclosing considerations of the things we actually have to do. Unlike in 1986, the baby boomers are now in full retirement mode. The aging population means more government spending, even if we get entitlement programs moderately under control. It also means slower growth. The United States grew at about 3.2 percent a year for the five decades after World War II. It is projected to grow at only 2.2 percent over the next few decades.

We need a tax reform that will raise revenue and significantly boost growth. The 1986 model

is poorly designed to do both those things.

Let's say we closed loopholes or capped itemized deductions at \$50,000, as many of the current proposals would do. That would raise, at most, about \$760 billion over 10 years. And it would produce much less than that if we started carving out exceptions for the charitable deduction, as we should. That revenue wouldn't be close to covering the trillions in new debt.

Let's say we raised the top tax rates back to where they were under President Bill Clinton. That wouldn't come close to raising sufficient revenue either. It might raise \$82 billion a year, according to the Joint Tax Committee. That's small potatoes compared with what's needed.

Let's say we closed the loopholes and raised rates all at once. That might theoretically produce enough revenue, if you hit the middle class, but it would decimate growth.

Even the 1986 reform, which closed loopholes and lowered rates, didn't do much to increase growth. Even after the reform was passed, people were paying the same amount in taxes, so they faced the same basic incentives.

If you closed loopholes and raised rates, as we'd have to do this time around, then you would make the incentives worse. Raising top tax rates may not be as cataclysmic for the economy as some have argued, but this is still one of the most growth-killing ways to raise revenue.

In other words, if we're going to simultaneously address our two most pressing needs — raising revenue and boosting growth — we're going to have to break free from the 1986 paradigm. That means asking the basic question: What is the single biggest problem with the tax code? It's not the complexity, bad as that is. The biggest problem is that it rewards consumption and punishes savings and investment.

You can't fundamentally address that problem within the 1986 paradigm. You can address it only through a consumption tax. This idea is off the table right now, but reality will inevitably drive us toward it. We have to have a consumption tax if we want to both grow the economy and reduce debt.

But isn't a consumption tax regressive since poor people spend a bigger share of their incomes than rich people? The late David F. Bradford of Princeton University effectively solved that problem with his so-called X Tax, which has recently been championed by Alan D. Viard of the American Enterprise Institute and others. Under the X Tax, you wouldn't pay the consumption tax at the cash register. Businesses would be taxed on their cash flow, taking an immediate deduction for investments rather than depreciating them over time. Households would pay tax at progressive rates on their wages but would not pay tax on income from savings.

The X Tax effectively taxes the money you spend right now and rewards savings and investment. The government could raise a chunk of revenue this way and significantly boost growth with little or no change in how tax burdens are distributed between rich and poor. Most economists vastly prefer consumption taxes to income taxes.

The other complaint is that a consumption tax is politically impossible to get passed. There are, indeed, political difficulties. But there would be huge political difficulties if we try to do another 1986-style act next year. Every special interest will fight every loophole closing. And after all that, the country would get very little benefit in return. The political barriers to an X Tax are no greater, and we would actually address our problems. It's time to break out of the 1986 paradigm. It's time to explore consumption taxes. Let's think about X. □

Hi-End Gingerbread Real Estate!

BETH J. HARPAZ

AP Travel Editor

NEW YORK (AP) —

Out of the kitchen and into the hotel lobby: Gingerbread houses have gone from being a homemade project

ers depict entire villages. A few extravaganzas raise money for charity, while some include contests for home bakers. Many are part of larger Christmas celebrations at luxury hotels

Classic American Homes," says these types of professional gingerbread creations "are elaborately detailed, spellbinding constructions that must require an army of pastry chefs, historians, engineers and consulting experts. The results can elevate the craft to a high art form that transports the viewer into an ethereal miniature fairy world." But Matheson doesn't approve of glue guns or other non-edible components: "It's 100 percent digestible or count me out."

For those who admire both homemade and high art gingerbread houses, here are details on a few extravagant displays around the country this holiday season. For the fourth year, Le Parker Meridien hotel in midtown Manhattan is hosting a lobby display of gingerbread houses designed by New York City bakeries. The houses include replicas of landmarks like the Egyptian Sphinx, the Mexican temple Chichen Itza and the Lincoln Memorial. A gingerbread creation of the hotel's executive chef Emile Castillo was inspired by a recent real-life headline, depicting a crane left dangling by Hurricane Sandy from atop a building on 57th Street. Customers of the hotel restaurant,



Emile Castillo, center, an executive chef at Le Parker Meridien hotel, standing by his gingerbread creation "The Hurri-CANE" at his hotel in New York. The landmark-inspired creation of a toppled hi-rise crane from hurricane Sandy, is being exhibited in the hotel's lobby with other over-the-top gingerbread houses from city restaurants. The annual display will benefit City Harvest, a food rescue organization for feeding the needy.

(AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

done with mom to professional exhibits designed by pastry chefs and sometimes even architects. And never mind the humble miniature: Some displays are life-size, while oth-

that also showcase decorated trees, Santa visits and holiday menus. Susan Matheson, co-author of the book "The Gingerbread Architect: Recipes and Blueprints for Twelve



"Chichen Itza," a gingerbread creation from Butterfly Bakeshop, is displayed in the lobby area of Le Parker Meridien hotel in New York.

(AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)



"Loch Ness and the Urquhart Castle in Scotland," a gingerbread creation from Rolling Pin Productions, is displayed in the lobby area of Le Parker Meridien hotel in New York.

(AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

Norma's, can get a ticket to vote on their favorite house by adding \$1 to their checks; the money goes to City Harvest, a local food bank.

The Mohegan Sun casino and resort in Uncasville, Conn., hosts a life-size gingerbread house that's 28 feet high (8.5 meters) and 20,000 pounds (9,000 kilos), made from 6,000 gingerbread bricks. Visitors can walk through the home to see tiny rooms decorated for Christmas with a holiday tree, chocolate stockings and cookies for Santa.

In Hawaii, a Waikiki hotel has a miniature global village in gingerbread. The display at the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani includes models of London's Tower Bridge, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, a pagoda from Yakushiji Temple in the ancient Japanese capital of Nara, and Hawaii's own Iolani Palace. Executive Chef Ralf Bauer started the tradition years ago to recreate scenery from his native Germany.

At the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, N.C., a gingerbread contest that began as a local event 20 years ago is now a national competition with more than \$7,500 in cash and prizes.

This year's 182 entries — including some from teens and young children — were judged by a panel that included pastry chefs, cookbook authors and a museum curator. A prize was also awarded to the gingerbread chef from farthest away, which this year went to a cook from Massachusetts.

The contest requires all entries to be completely edible.

In Philadelphia, a gingerbread display at The Shops at Liberty Place made by Philadelphia chefs was modeled after Fairmount Park historic sites.

The display, up until Dec. 9, serves as a preview event for the annual tour of Fairmount Park historic homes, which are open and decorated for the holidays until Dec. 16.

The Capital Hotel in Little Rock, Ark., has a 12-by-14-foot (3.6-by-4.2 meter) gingerbread village on display with an Arkansas countryside theme, including cows, horses, deer, rabbits and ducks along with a barn and an Ozark shack. Details include 100 hand-made pine trees dotting a sugar-coated winter scene with a Polar Express train and snow forts. □